

Chapter Nineteen

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT GUIDELINES

BUREAU OF DESIGN AND ENVIRONMENT MANUAL

Chapter Nineteen
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT GUIDELINES

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CHAPTER NINETEEN

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT GUIDELINES

The procedures in Chapter 19 are intended to provide a full opportunity for effective public participation and consideration of highway location and design proposals. In general, they provide for free and open discussion on project alternatives to encourage early resolution on controversial issues. The procedures also reflect coordination with other public agencies, private organizations, and individuals. The public involvement process ensures that potential adverse economic, social, and environmental effects are fully considered in project development. This should result in final decisions that reflect the best overall public interest in providing safe, economic, and efficient transportation with minimal adverse effects.

Chapter 19 applies to the development of all highway projects initiated by the Illinois Department of Transportation.

19-1 INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

19-1.01 General

During the development of a proposed highway project, the Department often must coordinate with a variety of agencies external to the Illinois Department of Transportation. Many of these contacts are informal and are only intended to discuss certain aspects of upcoming highway projects such as potential effects of the project on specific resources or cost participation by local agencies for improvements associated with or necessitated by a State highway project that affects local-system facilities. (Cost participation issues should be addressed with the affected local agencies as early as practical in project development. See Chapter 5.) Some agencies also have opportunities to review packages of information that are circulated for comment as described elsewhere in this *Manual*. In addition, notices of upcoming public involvement activities afford another mechanism for agencies to obtain information on proposed projects. All of these actions contribute to interagency coordination. This section discusses formal interagency coordination through regularly scheduled district coordination meetings (Section 19-1.02) and clearinghouse reviews (Section 19-1.03).

Section 19-1 provides information on interagency coordination within the context of public involvement. See Section 22-5 for more information on interagency coordination in relation to environmental requirements.

19-1.02 District Coordination Meetings

The district conducts periodic coordination meetings, which may involve personnel from the central offices, FHWA, and other agencies, as appropriate. The goal is to coordinate planning; identify social, economic, and environmental impacts; minimize these impacts through mitigation; and develop the best overall solution to satisfy the transportation needs. The coordination meetings may also result in field approvals of Phase I reports.

19-1.02(a) Scheduling Coordination Meetings

The district should schedule coordination meetings on a fixed basis; however, the frequency of meetings may vary among districts. Coordination meetings may be scheduled two to twelve times per year. Each district should review its workload and job progression and then determine the number and frequency of meetings necessary to meet its needs and combine as many coordination activities as practical. BDE will develop an annual coordination meeting schedule in cooperation with districts and FHWA to eliminate meeting conflicts among districts and to allow appropriate central office personnel to be available. The district should schedule reports eligible for field approval for completion prior to coordination meetings to minimize project delays and transmittals to the central office. Distribute a tentative agenda approximately two weeks in advance of each meeting.

19-1.02(b) Appropriate Representation

Invite persons to the meetings who have a role in project development and decision making, such as central office environmental specialists, district specialists and, if applicable, the consultant's project manager, environment leads, and specialists.

If projects to be discussed significantly affect other agencies or require special expertise or coordination, the district should invite the applicable agencies to the coordination meeting. Highlight in the invitations and agendas the projects and issues requiring the expertise of the other agencies. State agencies (e.g., Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, Illinois Department of Agriculture, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency) and Federal agencies (e.g., Department of the Interior, Army Corps of Engineers) may be involved frequently. Consultant environmental staff should attend coordination meetings if environmental issues on their projects are an agenda topic.

19-1.02(c) Topics for Discussion

Coordination meetings should address such topics as the need for and adequacy of environmental reports, need for special reports, typical sections, intersection design studies, design exceptions, etc. The scoping of environmental reports (see 40 CFR 1501.7, 23 CFR 771.119(b) and 771.123(b)) is an appropriate topic for coordination meetings. When other

agencies are present, the coordination meeting may serve as the scoping meeting as discussed in Section 24-2, Activity 07, and Section 25-2, Activity 08.

Submit an agenda to the intended participants at least two weeks prior to the meeting. Include the following items in the agenda for each project to be discussed:

- a short description of the project, its location, and the desired action or reason for including the project on the agenda, including environmental issues, as appropriate;
- the route designation and transportation system (e.g., NHS), funding, and anticipated construction year;
- design policy to be used;
- status of environmental surveys; and
- district contact person for the project and, as appropriate, the project consultant.

Also indicate on the agenda projects to be advertised in the Professional Transportation Bulletin and include in the agenda any topics of general concern intended for discussion. Include documentation with the agenda, as necessary, to support the desired action for specific projects.

19-1.02(d) Information Presented

The information presented at a coordination meeting usually depends on:

- the project development stage,
- coverage at previous coordination meetings, and
- the scope of the project.

A major project on new alignment may involve many topics and presentations at numerous meetings over the duration of the study. If a minor project requires discussion, a brief presentation may be sufficient.

Because several projects may be discussed at each coordination meeting, information that has been previously presented and discussed need not be repeated. However, the meeting should include a brief summary of important points previously discussed and any decisions reached on each project.

If design exceptions will be requested, the district must provide supporting documentation/justification. The supporting documentation/justification for design exceptions ultimately will be included in the Phase I report.

The district should also make available appropriate information on the mitigation of impacts, effects on sensitive areas, detours, and stream crossings. Explain any channel work proposed in stream crossings so that the degree of impact can be determined.

19-1.02(e) Documentation

At all coordination meetings, the district must maintain a record on who attended and what transpired. Although a verbatim transcript is not necessary for coordination meetings, a recording on tape may be useful to the district if questions arise on the accuracy of typed minutes. Prepare minutes promptly and send to each agency that was represented at the meeting. The transmittal letter should describe the process for correction of the minutes and set a time limit for submitting any corrections.

The suggested format for the minutes is shown in Figure 19-1A. Identify each project discussed in the minutes, and provide special attention to any scoping actions because documentation may be required later. Each project should be covered on a separate page(s).

19-1.02(f) Recommended Practices

The following practices are recommended for coordination meetings to improve their effectiveness.

- Use video-teleconference where practical.
- Schedule meetings for projects eligible for field approval prior to or after the regular meeting. Indicate the schedule for these meetings in the agenda and provide appropriate information for action in advance of the meeting.
- Schedule separate meetings for large or complex project issues, including the review of report comments.
- Avoid getting bogged down on minor issues that can be resolved over the phone or within the district.
- Keep the discussion focused on the desired action.
- Use slides, photographs, aerial photos, and other visual exhibits to clarify issues.

MINUTES OF COORDINATION MEETING

DISTRICT 1

May 9, 2002

ATTENDANCE

- Federal Agencies
- State Agencies
- Local Agencies
- FHWA
- IDOT Central Office
- District Office

PROJECT #1

- Project location, identification information
- Description of existing conditions, traffic data, and any high-crash locations
- Description of proposed work and status of development
- Information presented (e.g., on environmental surveys, impacts, mitigation)
- Comments and input received, including scoping actions/information (see Section 22-5.01(c))
- Design exceptions presented and action taken
- Environmental report concurrence

MINUTES OF COORDINATION MEETING FORMAT

Figure 19-1A

- Provide appropriate handouts such as location maps, ADT/DHV schematics, typical section drawings, crash history information, synopsis of environmental issues, and critical path items.
- Submit completed forms for Nationwide Section 404 Permit 23 to BDE prior to the coordination meeting.
- Provide meeting minutes to participants within two weeks following the meeting.

19-1.03 Clearinghouse Coordination

Clearinghouse coordination is now a State-controlled process, which was established after Federal Executive Order 12372 revoked OMB Circular A-95 and offered States and localities the opportunity to initiate and establish their own review procedures and priorities. Under the Order, States can decide which activities to review and how they should be reviewed. The Order encourages States to establish a single point of contact, through which all reviews can be focused. In Illinois, the single point of contact, originally established as the Governor's Office of Planning, has now become the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs. The review process is similar to that used to comply with OMB Circular A-95. FHWA is obligated to cooperate with the State-established process and provide an explanation if State Clearinghouse comments are not accommodated.

The procedures outlined herein are for Federal-aid projects and for the State Clearinghouse only and do not affect or change procedures related to other regulations such as those pertaining to NEPA, the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 404 Permits, Regional Planning Commissions (Substate Clearinghouses), or Section 4(f). In addition, the Department has developed these procedures in coordination with the State Clearinghouse and, as a result, they apply only to the State Clearinghouse. The districts will perform substate coordination. Because coordination with Substate Clearinghouses varies in different parts of the State, this *Manual* does not describe its coordination. Because the central office review occasionally results in revisions to the information submitted to the State Clearinghouse, BDE recommends that the substate contacts not be initiated until confirmation of the State Clearinghouse submittal is received in the district. This delay allows the district the opportunity to adjust the substate submittal, if necessary, to match the State submittal.

19-1.03(a) General

All submissions to the State Clearinghouse will consist of a Project Notification and Review Form (BDE 2126) and a map that clearly indicates the project's location. Figure 19-1B illustrates the Project Notification and Review form.


**Illinois Department
of Transportation**

(11/02)

**Project Notification
and Review**

1. Legal Applicant / Recipient a. Applicant Name: ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION b. Organization Unit: DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS c. Street / P.O. Box: 2300 SOUTH DIRKSEN PARKWAY d. City: SPRINGFIELD e. County: SANGAMON f. State: ILLINOIS g. Zip Code: 62764 h. Contact Person: _____ (name & telephone no.)		2. S.A.I. Number 3. Application Date 4. Type of Application <input type="checkbox"/> Continuation <input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal <input type="checkbox"/> Revision 5. Federal Cat. No. 20.205 Highway Planning and Construction												
6. Federal Agency to Review Request: FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION		7. Program Book No./FY												
8. The Applicant Certifies That:	a. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the data in this preapplication / application is true and correct. b. If required, this application was submitted to appropriate clearinghouses (1) (2)													
9. Certifying Representative	a. Typed Name and Title	b. Signature												
10. Title and Description Route _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Early Warning Limits _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Design County _____ City _____ Section _____ Structure Number _____ Urban <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Add Lanes Rural <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Channelization ROW _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Grading Easements _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Intersection Improve. ADT (Current) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Paving ADT (Projected) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Realignment Length _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Reconstruct Fed. Proj. No. _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Structure Contract No. _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Resurface Maps No. _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Curb & Gutter		11. Proposed Funding <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td>a. Federal</td><td>\$</td></tr> <tr><td>b. Applicant</td><td>\$</td></tr> <tr><td>c. State</td><td>\$</td></tr> <tr><td>d. Local</td><td>\$</td></tr> <tr><td>e. Other</td><td>\$</td></tr> <tr><td>f. Total</td><td>\$</td></tr> </table> <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Signals <input type="checkbox"/> Detour <input type="checkbox"/> Widen & Resurface <input type="checkbox"/> Endangered Species <input type="checkbox"/> 4 (f) <input type="checkbox"/> Historic Site <input type="checkbox"/> 404 Permit <input type="checkbox"/> In-Stream Work <input type="checkbox"/> Arch. Survey <input type="checkbox"/> Runaround <input type="checkbox"/> Borrow Required <input type="checkbox"/> Stage Construction <input type="checkbox"/> Channel Change <input type="checkbox"/> Tree Removal <input type="checkbox"/> Const. Crossing <input type="checkbox"/> Wetlands <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Hazardous Waste <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____	a. Federal	\$	b. Applicant	\$	c. State	\$	d. Local	\$	e. Other	\$	f. Total	\$
a. Federal	\$													
b. Applicant	\$													
c. State	\$													
d. Local	\$													
e. Other	\$													
f. Total	\$													
12. General Description														

At the beginning of each fiscal year, each district should review its entire annual and multi-year programs to determine whether or not contacts with the Clearinghouse will be required for the implementation of its projects. See Section 19-1.03(e) (criteria for determining need for Clearinghouse review) to determine if a Federally funded project requires Clearinghouse review. Small projects not yet initiated may require both an Early Warning and a Design Stage contact, and large projects initiated in previous years may require a Design contact or a two-year update. The scheduling of submittals to the State Clearinghouse should include the time required for review, which ranges from a minimum of 30 days to a maximum of 60 days exclusive of mailing time and central office review.

The District should perform the clearinghouse coordination if a project meets the review criteria (see Section 19-1.03(e)) and is eligible for Federal funds regardless of the programmed funding type. This will enable a project to be cleared for letting if funding should be changed at a later date.

Clearinghouse reviews do not replace or eliminate the need for other coordination that might be required for environmental assessments, historic evaluations, various permits, or involvement of affected agencies, local governments, and land owners. Similarly, exemption from Clearinghouse requirements does not eliminate the need for coordination required by other laws and regulations.

Federal agencies responsible for granting licenses and permits, such as those required by Section 404 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, may consult with State and area-wide Clearinghouses and seek their evaluation of impacts prior to granting these licenses or permits. If Clearinghouse coordination is accomplished prior to forwarding a permit request, attach evidence of this coordination to the request. With evidence of Clearinghouse coordination, the permitting agency may forego additional Clearinghouse contacts thus reducing the time required to process the permit.

19-1.03(b) Clearinghouse Procedures

The majority of Federal-aid projects are developed as a Combined Design Report or Project Report, and they will be accompanied by an environmental assessment or excluded from NEPA by category. As a result, the Department considers the processing of these Combined Design Reports or Project Reports typical, and it is described in the following discussion as normal processing. Processing for other reports is described separately.

When a Combined Design Report is initiated, one of the first actions is to notify the Clearinghouse that a Study has begun. The limits and scope of work for a Clearinghouse submittal should be the same as the limits and scope of work for the Phase I Report. This is done through an Early Warning Notice. The district should prepare the Early Warning Notice and should forward four copies to BDE. BDE will review the Notice for compliance with this section and forward it to the State Clearinghouse. The Notice should consist of a completed

Project Notification and Review Form (BDE 2126) and a good-quality map clearly locating the project. Limited detailed information will be available, and many of the blanks will be completed using estimates or preliminary information. Once the Notice has been forwarded to BDE, the district should proceed with work on the project.

It is not necessary to wait for a response. The Clearinghouse will distribute the information to its reviewers and, in approximately 30 days, it will provide a response containing any comments received. When the response is received, the district should address any comments contained therein during the Study. The Early Warning Notice need not be repeated. Early Warning Notices will satisfy Clearinghouse coordination requirements for requesting FHWA authorization on any work that is necessary to obtain design approval.

Prior to project inclusion in the letting schedule, it will be necessary to solicit another Clearinghouse review. This review will be called the Design Stage Sign-off. To avoid delaying project letting, the district should forward four copies of this submittal to BDE immediately after completing the public involvement activities. The submittal to the Clearinghouse should consist of a completed Project Notification and Review Form and a map clearly indicating the location of the project. Instructions on completion of the form are included in Section 19-1.03(d). The review at this stage normally requires about 30 days. On all projects subject to Clearinghouse requirements, a Design Stage Sign-off is necessary to request FHWA authorization on any work subsequent to design approval.

If a project appears in the Construction Contractor's Transportation Bulletin within two years after receipt of the Design Stage Sign-off and proceeds to construction, further contacts with the Clearinghouse are not required. However, if the project does not proceed to construction or does not appear in the Bulletin within two years, the district must initiate an additional contact with the Clearinghouse. This does not apply to projects that are STAGE CONSTRUCTED; i.e., where a portion of the project is constructed and the other portion is not let for a few years. This situation requires that the remaining portion be submitted to the appropriate Clearinghouses if two years have elapsed since the project was last signed-off by the Clearinghouse. An example is a three-mile (five-kilometer) roadway project in which the first mile (1.6 kilometer) of the project is awarded and constructed within two years of the Design Stage Sign-off and the last two miles (3.4 kilometers) are not included on a Bulletin until three years later. This two-mile (3.4-kilometer) portion must be resubmitted to the appropriate Clearinghouse for the Design/Renewal submittal. If any changes have been made to the project, then it will be submitted as a Design Renewal/Revision submittal. The annual review of the Highway Construction Program should include the need for additional contacts at this point in project development. The district should solicit a Design Stage Renewal and/or Revision from the Clearinghouse in time for the project to appear on the scheduled Construction Contractor's Transportation Bulletin without delay. Because the Clearinghouse may require up to 60 days, make submittals to the Clearinghouse no less than 90 days prior to publication of the Bulletin.

The Design Stage Renewal and/or Revision contact should consist of a Project Notification and Review Form (BDE 2126) and a map clearly indicating the location of the project. Update the

information contained in these documents from that which appeared in the previous Design Stage contact. The description should indicate any changes in scope, and the funding blank should indicate the latest available estimate.

19-1.03(c) Projects Not Normally Involving a Formal Phase I Report

Those project types with minor scope and which do not normally require the preparation of a formal Phase I Report will normally be exempt from Clearinghouse coordination requirements. However, if such a project involves the acquisition of additional right-of-way or otherwise fails to meet the criteria for exemption, submit a request for a Design Stage Sign-off to the Clearinghouse similar to that described in Section 19-1.03(b). Also, if two years elapse between the Design Stage Sign-off and the time the project first appears in a Construction Contractor's Transportation Bulletin, the district should submit a Design Stage Renewal and/or Revision.

19-1.03(d) Instructions for Completing BDE 2126 (Project Notification and Review Form)

The Project Notification and Review Form (BDE 2126) provides a transportation-oriented form for use in coordinating with the State Clearinghouse. Generally, the Form will only require the addition of a good-quality map clearly indicating the project location. An appendix is not required. The following instructions apply to the completion of Blanks 1 through 12 in preparing submittals to the Illinois State Clearinghouse for Federal-aid projects. A fully completed Form will facilitate the most expeditious processing of Clearinghouse reviews.

BLANK #1: Legal Applicant/Recipient

- a. Illinois Department of Transportation
- b. Division of Highways
- c. 2300 South Dirksen Parkway
- d. Springfield
- e. Sangamon
- f. Illinois
- g. 62764
- h. Chief of Program Support Unit, BDE Project Development and Implementation Section, (217) 785-8648

BLANK # 2: SAI Number

For the Early Warning Notice (EWN) only, leave this space blank. Upon receipt of the EWN, the State Clearinghouse will issue a State Application Identifier (SAI) Number for the project. The assigned number will be inserted in this Blank when the project is subsequently submitted to the State Clearinghouse for the Design Stage and any required design renewal or revision submittals.

BLANK # 3: Application Date

Insert the date that the Form is completed. This date will change each time a new submittal is made to the State Clearinghouse.

BLANK # 4: Type of Application

Check “NEW” for all projects which are being submitted to the State Clearinghouse for the first time and do not have an SAI number.

Check “CONTINUATION” for projects which were previously submitted for EWN and are now being submitted for the Design Stage without any changes in scope or work, termini, ROW requirements, environmental or historic impact, etc.

Check “RENEWAL” for projects being submitted because the two-year time limit on the sign-off has expired and the scope of work, termini, ROW requirements, environmental and historic impact, etc., has not changed.

Check “REVISION” for projects being submitted because the scope of work, termini, ROW requirements, environmental and historic impact, etc., has changed.

Check “CONTINUATION” and “REVISION” if both are applicable. Check “RENEWAL” and “REVISION” if both are applicable.

BLANK # 5: Federal Catalogue Number

There are only two Federal Domestic Assistance Catalogue numbers that apply to highways. Almost all IDOT projects will be funded under 20.205, Highway Planning and Construction.

BLANK # 6: Federal Agency to Receive Request

Write out Federal Highway Administration.

BLANK #7: Program Book Number

If the project appears in the current Annual Program Book, enter the program book number. If it does not appear as a construction item but as a land acquisition or preliminary engineering item, enter that number. If it does not appear at all in the current Annual Program Book, then enter the estimated fiscal year in which construction is expected to begin.

BLANK #8: The Applicant Certifies That

- a. No entry is required.

- b. Projects being submitted to the State Clearinghouse should have one or more substate Clearinghouse names entered if appropriate. For projects being submitted to a substate Clearinghouse, enter the Illinois State Clearinghouse.

BLANK #9: Certifying Representative

- a. Type in the name and title of the person who is certifying to the accuracy of the information contained on the Form. This person should be the level of a District Bureau Chief or higher.
- b. The signature of that person.
- c. The date the signature was entered on the Form.

BLANK #10: Title and Description

- Route: Enter the marked route first or common name of the road if not a marked route. The Federal-aid route may also be useful.
- Limits: This should give the termini of the project, any creek or river bridges involved, etc. This should be the same as that shown in the MAPS file, Program Book, and the PCS system. (Do not use station numbers; most reviewers cannot locate a project by this information.)
- County: Enter the county or counties in which the project is located.
- City: Enter the city or cities that the project may impact.
- Section: Enter the project's section number.
- Structure Number: Enter the structure number or numbers if structures are included in the project.
- Early Warning/ Design: Check the appropriate box.
- Urban/Rural: Check the appropriate box or both.
- ROW: Enter the acres (hectares) of land acquisition required for the project. Include the nature of the taking (e.g., 10 ft (3 m) strip throughout the project length, or land acquisitions concentrated at intersections for additional turning lanes) in the general description at Blank 12.

Easements:	Enter the acres (hectares) of the easement and state if it is a temporary or permanent easement.
ADT: (Current)	Enter the current ADT and, in parentheses, the year projected.
ADT: (Projected)	Enter the projected ADT and, in parentheses, the year projected.
Length:	Enter the length of the project.
Federal Proj. No:	Enter the number if project is a Local Roads project.
Contract Number:	Enter the contract number or numbers applicable to the limits and scope of work on the subject submittal.
MAPS No:	Enter all MAPS project numbers applicable to the contract numbers shown on the Form.
"Add Lanes" through "Widen & Resurf":	Check all boxes that describe activities included in the proposed improvement.
"4(f)" through "Haz Waste":	Check all boxes that describe an anticipated project involvement.
Blank Spaces:	These spaces may be used to add other activities or involvements not listed herein.

BLANK #11: Proposed Funding

The first contact with the Clearinghouse should show the best available cost estimate to complete the entire project including preliminary engineering, right-of-way acquisition, utility adjustments, railroad adjustments, and construction. For all subsequent Clearinghouse contacts, show the latest refinement of that total estimate, especially when "Revision" was marked for Blank 4. Enter the Federal share of the total funding on line a. Enter the State share (because the State is the applicant) on line b. If other agencies or organizations, such as local governments or private businesses, will participate, enter their share on the appropriate line and the grand total on line f.

BLANK #12: General Description

This blank should describe in layman's terms the work to be included in the proposed project. The boxes checked in Blank 10 indicate a general description of the work. Blank 12 should expand on that information further but should be brief to eliminate the need to update the submittal if dimensions of structures, medians, lanes, shoulders, etc., are changed during project development. The description should include the reason for the improvement and the goals to be accomplished. Use the back of the Form if additional space is needed.

19-1.03(e) Criteria for Determining Need for Clearinghouse Review

State Clearinghouse review is required on projects eligible for Federal funds that meet any of the following criteria:

- Upgrade an existing facility or provide new access to an area, in effect consisting of more than rehabilitation or modernization.
- Change the use, scope, or intensity of use of existing facilities.
- Require additional right-of-way.
- Involve potentially significant social, economic, or environmental impacts.
- Require a Federal license or permit.

The following examples are provided for further information and guidance on project types that generally will meet one or more of the criteria for requiring State Clearinghouse review:

- Projects on new alignment.
- Addition of through lanes (either by widening, reconstruction, eliminating parking, changing to one-way couple, or any combination of these).
- Addition of new interchanges to existing freeways.
- Involvement of 4(f), 404 Permits, historic properties, etc.
- Projects likely to precipitate significant changes in land use or development.
- Need for additional right-of-way or permanent easements.
- Projects that significantly increase traffic by eliminating a critical bottleneck.

- Structure replacement or widening when substructure is widened or revised (unless the structure is over a road or railroad).
- Projects involving in-stream work.

State Clearinghouse review is not required on projects that meet all of the following criteria:

- Consist of rehabilitation or modernization of existing facilities.
- Do not change the use, scale, or intensity of use of existing facilities.
- Do not require additional right-of-way.
- Do not involve the use of Federal funds.

The following examples are provided for further information and guidance on project types that generally will not meet the criteria for State Clearinghouse review (provided the projects do not involve additional right-of-way):

- Channelization of intersections, including turning bays.
- Modification of traffic signals and control systems.
- Intersection approach lane widening.
- Intersection widening to include turn bays.
- Traffic control signs and markings.
- Pavement skid treatment by overlay or grooving.
- Highway lighting and landscaping.
- Pedestrian over or under crossing structures.
- Structure widening for safety clearances and increased lane widths if substructure remains unchanged.
- Railroad-highway crossing warning devices.
- Installation of breakaway signs or lighting supports, fences, impact attenuators, guardrails, median barriers.
- Structures that are over roads or railroads.

19-1.03(f) Agencies Who Review IDOT State Clearinghouse Submittals

The following agencies are provided copies of project notifications by the State Clearinghouse. Area-wide clearinghouses receive notices even though IDOT district offices have accomplished coordination:

- Corp. for National Community Services
- Illinois Housing Development Authority
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
- Illinois Dept. of Military Affairs
- Illinois Air National Guard
- Illinois Dept. of Corrections
- Illinois Dept. of Rehabilitation Services
- Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
- Illinois State Fire Marshal
- Illinois Historic Preservation Agency
- Intergovernmental Cooperation Commission
- Illinois State Police
- Illinois Dept. of Transportation (Highways)
- Illinois Dept. of Transportation (Aeronautics)
- Illinois Dept. of Human Services
- Illinois State Board of Education
- Illinois Capital Development Board
- Illinois Secretary of State
- Illinois Dept. of Agriculture
- Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources (Planning)

19-1.03(g) Substate Clearinghouses in Illinois

The following lists the substate clearinghouses currently recognized in Illinois:

Clearinghouse No.	Name
1.	Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission
2.	Bi-State Regional Commission
3.	Tri-County Regional Planning Commission
4.	McLean County Regional Planning Commission
5.	Champaign County Regional Planning Commission
6.	Macon County Regional Planning Commission
7.	Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission
8.	East-West Gateway Coordinating Council
9.	Greater Egypt Regional Planning & Development Commission
10.	Southeastern Illinois Regional Planning & Development Commission

11. Greater Wabash Regional Planning Commission
12. South Central Illinois Regional Planning and Development Commission |
13. Southwestern Illinois Metropolitan & Regional Planning Commission
14. Kankakee County Regional Planning Commission
15. Western Illinois Regional Council
16. Two Rivers Regional Council of Public Officials
17. West Central Illinois Valley Regional Planning Commission
18. Southern Five Regional Planning District & Development Commission
19. North Central Illinois Council of Governments
20. Logan County Regional Planning Commission
21. Morgan County Regional Planning Commission

County	No.	County	No.
Adams	16	Marshall	19
Alexander	18	Massac	18
Bond	13	McDonough	15
Brown	16	McHenry	1
Bureau	19	McLean	20
Calhoun	17	Mercer	2
Champaign	5	Monroe	8
Christian	17	Montgomery	17
Clinton	13	Morgan	21
Cook	1	Peoria	3
DuPage	1	Perry	9
Edwards	11	Pike	16
Effingham	12	Pope	10
Fayette	12	Pulaski	18
Franklin	9	Putnam	19
Gallatin	10	Randolph	13
Greene	17	Rock Island	2
Hamilton	10	St. Clair	8
Hancock	15	Saline	10
Hardin	10	Sangamon	7
Henderson	15	Schuyler	16
Henry	2	Shelby	17
Jackson	9	Stark	19
Jefferson	9	Tazewell	3
Jersey	17	Union	18
Johnson	18	Wabash	11
Kane	1	Warren	15
Kankakee	14	Washington	13
Lake	1	Wayne	11
Logan	20	White	11
Macon	6	Will	1
Macoupin	17	Williamson	9
Madison	8	Woodford	3
Marion	12		

Note: Figure 19-1C contains an alphabetical list of counties covered by substate clearinghouses. The number beside each county represents the clearinghouse of which it is a part.

COUNTIES COVERED BY SUBSTATE CLEARINGHOUSES

Figure 19-1C

19-2 REQUIREMENTS FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS

19-2.01 Federal Law

Section 128 of Title 23 of the United States Code specifically requires:

Any State highway department which submits plans for a Federal-aid highway project involving the bypassing of, or going through, any city, town, or village, either incorporated or unincorporated, shall certify to the Secretary that it has had public hearings, or has afforded the opportunity for such hearings, and has considered the economic and social effects of such a location, its impact on the environment, and its consistency with the goals and objectives of such urban planning as has been promulgated by the community. Any State highway department which submits plans for an Interstate System project shall certify to the Secretary that it has had public hearings at a convenient location, or has afforded the opportunity for such hearings, for the purpose of enabling persons in rural areas through or contiguous to whose property the highway will pass to express any objections they may have to the proposed location of such highway. Such certification shall be accompanied by a report that indicates the consideration given to the economic, social, environmental, and other effects of the plan or highway location or design and various alternatives which were raised during the hearing or which were otherwise considered.

Federal law thus requires that public hearings be held or offered under certain circumstances, whether or not the public displays an interest in the project.

19-2.02 Definition and Application

For the Division of Highways to determine when a public hearing or an offer for a public hearing is required to comply with the first part of Section 128 of Title 23 USC, the Division must define what is meant by the *bypassing of or going through any city, town, or village*. The Department interprets the phrase to denote three characteristics of projects to which it will apply:

- large size and effect,
- involvement of long-distance through traffic, and
- involvement of population centers or concentrations of people.

Projects that pass through or bypass communities involve a considerable amount of traffic which is not local but which is passing through the area. This is typical of routes with classifications of trunk highway or major highway (i.e., arterials) and perhaps, in some cases, area service roads when small towns or villages are involved. These projects generally involve the choice of different corridors or locations for the improvement. The Department interprets that lesser projects were not intended for inclusion. Because the reference is to projects that affect cities, towns, and villages, the law seems to be concerned with a project's effect on a

community as a whole. The concern for populated areas is further emphasized by the requirement to comply or coordinate with *urban* planning.

For the purpose of determining the need for the holding or offering of a public hearing on projects proposed by the Division of Highways, Section 128 of Title 23 of the U. S. Code is defined to mean that a public hearing shall be held or offered on all projects that involve the relocation of marked route (State highway system) traffic through or around any city, town, or village. This is interpreted as requiring the holding or offering of a public hearing on projects such as:

- a new bypass around a community,
- a new marked route going through a community,
- the relocation of an existing marked route from one street to another which did not previously carry marked route traffic (with or without additional right-of-way),
- changing to a one-way couple which will use a street that did not previously carry marked route traffic (with or without additional right-of-way), and
- the reconstruction of an existing marked route with additional through traffic lanes through town (included because a reasonable alternative would be a bypass or one-way couple).

Projects such as the following will not require the holding or offering of a public hearing as a result of 23 USC 128:

- upgrading an existing marked route to current design criteria for 20-year traffic including the acquisition of additional right-of-way, but not including additional through traffic lanes;
- intersection improvements including signals, throat widening, adding turn lanes, and other channelization;
- widening less than a one-lane width and resurfacing, with or without additional right-of-way;
- changing from open ditches to closed drainage; and/or
- projects in rural areas which do not pass through or bypass a city, town, or village.

Department policy is to provide all interested persons an opportunity to become acquainted with highway proposals of concern to them and to express their views at those stages of a proposed development when the flexibility to respond to those views still exists. Accordingly, the Illinois

DOT may require public involvement activities in addition to the holding or offering of public hearings on Federal-aid projects. Also, the Department *requires* other public involvement activities on Federal-aid projects which require additional right-of-way, even though Federal law does not require the holding or offering of a public hearing.

19-2.03 FHWA Environmental Regulations

In accordance with the FHWA Regulations on Environmental and Related Procedures (23 CFR 771), the Department will hold one or more public hearings or offer the opportunity for hearing(s) to be held at a convenient time and place for any Federal-aid project which:

- requires significant amounts of right-of-way (see Section 19-2.04);
- substantially changes the layout or functions of connecting roadways or of the facility being improved (see Section 19-2.05); or
- has a substantial adverse impact on abutting property, otherwise has a significant social, economic, environmental or other effect or for which FHWA determines that a public hearing is in the public interest (see Section 19-2.06).

The following sections provide further guidance on the application of these criteria. If the district determines that the application of these criteria does not indicate sufficient impacts or changes to warrant a public hearing, consider the need for other forms of public involvement and provide opportunities as appropriate (see Section 19-3).

19-2.04 Significant Right-of-Way

When a project is planned for new location, it will involve a significant amount of right-of-way and have considerable impact on the area in which it is located. For those projects that basically use the existing alignment with minor relocations or require additional strips of right-of-way, the district must consider several factors in determining whether or not the taking is significant. When it is determined to be significant, a public hearing must be held or offered.

19-2.04(a) Quantity

The first factor to consider is the quantity of land to be acquired. The significance of the quantity will vary depending upon the character of the surrounding land. In rural areas, the acquisition of ten to 20 acres (four to eight hectares) for a project several miles (kilometers) in length may be insignificant. In urbanized areas, takings involving less than one acre (one-half hectare) might be significant if high-cost properties will be affected. In suburban areas each location must be evaluated separately considering the density of population, the remaining open space available, and the impact on improvements that might be located on any of the properties affected.

19-2.04(b) Number of Owners

The significance of right-of-way takings can also be judged by the number of property owners involved. There is no specific number for which a public hearing is required; however, the number does affect the scope of work required for involvement activities. As a minimum, the district must contact individual property owners from whom land will be acquired during the project development stage. At some point, it is practical to hold one meeting rather than to separately contact all of the property owners involved. Generally, separate contacts of more than six to eight property owners is not as cost effective as offering a public hearing, holding an informational meeting, or holding an open house in a van, trailer, or other facility.

19-2.04(c) Usage

The use of the property to be acquired can result in a significant impact even if the number of owners is small. If a property proposed for acquisition is used as a recreational area or a wildlife refuge, or if it is part of a historic site, it may be protected by Federal law. The acquisition of such protected properties requires specific procedures (see Chapter 26) that are designed to protect and preserve the character and use of these properties. Other effects that might be considered significant are takings that will impact improvements on the property. A typical example is the taking of storage tanks or pumps from service stations at intersections. Although the property taking might be minimal, the impact on the business, and perhaps the neighborhood, may be considered significant. Other situations might involve water supplies or power supplies feeding particular communities or neighborhoods, or small takings along a street that might affect a neighborhood or community commercial area.

19-2.05 Changes in the Layout or Function

Projects that change the layout of a facility or the layout of the roads and streets that connect to it could have considerable impact upon abutting properties and users of the facility. Generally, changes in layout will involve the acquisition of additional right-of-way, and the district should consider the factors discussed in Section 19-2.04. Another factor includes adverse travel and service to abutting properties, which usually result in considerable public interest. The development of a public involvement program is warranted to address these impacts and, if substantial changes will occur, a public hearing must be held or offered.

Changes in the function of a street or highway, especially when not accompanied by the acquisition of additional right-of-way, result in more subtle impacts to abutting property owners and other citizens. These impacts may be more difficult to recognize and, whether real or perceived, may create considerable public interest in a particular highway project. The district should carefully consider this when determining the need for a public involvement program or public hearing.

There are several changes that are sufficient to cause a change in the function of a facility or connecting roads and streets. These changes do not necessarily require the acquisition of additional right-of-way, but they alter the character of use such as changing from local access to through traffic. The following is a list of typical actions that are considered changes in function:

- Changing from two lanes to four or more lanes.
- Changing from no median or a flush median to a raised median.
- Changing to a one-way couple that involves a street not previously carrying through traffic.
- Changing access control.
- Addition of a tall median barrier restricting pedestrian crossings.
- Fencing the right-of-way line.
- Removal of on-street parking.

The reverse of these actions also constitutes a change in the function.

Changes in the function may result in a number of impacts that create considerable controversy or public interest. The following lists typical impacts that may result from the changes in the function of a facility or its connecting roads and streets:

- Change in traffic volume.
- Change in the type and character of traffic, such as volume of trucks, local or through traffic, low- or high-speed traffic.
- Change in commercial or residential development affecting the neighborhood character.
- Change in property values.
- Change in pedestrian accessibility.
- Change in travel patterns or distance.

19-2.06 Social, Economic, and Environmental Effects

Any project which will cause a substantial change in the social, economic, or environmental setting in which the project is located could be considered sufficient cause for designing and

implementing a public involvement program. In determining whether or not a hearing is warranted consider the following factors:

1. The effect on regional and community growth of the area including general plans, proposed land use, total transportation requirements, and the status of the planning process.
2. The conservation and preservation of natural resources and our national heritage including park and recreational facilities, wildlife and waterfowl areas, historic and natural landmarks, prime farmland, and the ecology of the project area.
3. The effect on local government and public facilities and services including religious, health, and educational facilities, public utilities, fire protection and other emergency services, and local transportation facilities.
4. Community cohesion including residential and neighborhood character and stability, highway impacts on minority, low-income, and other specific groups and interests, and effects on tax base and property values.
5. Displacement of people, businesses, and farms including relocation assistance, and the business and economic climate of the area including employment gains and losses and access to work locations.
6. Air, noise, and water pollution including consistency with approved air quality implementation plans, noise abatement criteria, and water quality standards.
7. Aesthetic and other values including visual quality (e.g., such as “view of the road” and “view from the road”) and the joint development and multiple use of space.

The district should consider the impact of construction activities including detours and road closures and the resultant impact after completion of the improvement.

If adverse impacts, which are considered significant, occur in any of these categories, a public hearing must be held or offered. For additional guidance on impacts and their significance, see Part III of the *BDE Manual* and the *Air Quality Manual*, the *Water Quality Manual*, the *Socio-Economic Impact Assessment Manual*, the *Traffic Noise and Vibration Manual*, and the *Ecological and Natural Resource Manual*.

19-2.07 General Public Interest

Public interest in a project or program of projects can be sufficient to warrant the development of a public involvement program, including a public hearing not otherwise warranted under Sections 19-2.04, 19-2.05, or 19-2.06. This is more likely to occur when a program of projects

is involved. Although individual projects may not be critical, the program as a whole may cause cumulative impacts sufficient to warrant a separate involvement program. Significant program impacts generally relate to communities as a whole with effects across the spectrum of social, economic, and environmental character. A program of projects in this case may include several projects in and/or near a single urban area or within a single county and need not encompass the entire district.

When a program or series of projects will be initiated in a general locality, much of the controversy or antagonism can be averted by providing some advance notice and a public forum for the citizenry to receive information about the projects and to comment where appropriate. An effective public involvement program can consolidate overall public support and contribute significantly to the early completion of projects with the additional benefit of a positive attitude towards the Department.

19-2.08 Road Closures

When the Department proposes to close a road to eliminate an at-grade crossing or junction with an Interstate highway or a highway where the authority to control access has been exercised to permit access only at certain public roads, 605 ILCS 5/8-106 (Illinois Compiled Statutes) requires that a *public hearing* be held to consider the road closure. Such a road closure hearing must be held in the county where the closing is situated and must consider the needs of local traffic and the effect of the closing on other highways in the locality. The preparation of final construction plans shall not begin until road closure hearings have been held. See Chapter 11 for more information on road closures.

Road closure hearings may be held in conjunction with other required hearings. If the discussion of road closures will extend the length of the presentation beyond the time limits discussed in this Section, separate hearings may be necessary. Because road closures should be discussed in environmental reports, the district should schedule road closure hearings prior to the preparation of the final report if not combined with other hearings. Changes in proposed road closures may be sufficient grounds for preparing revised or supplemental environmental reports. Hearing announcements should be in conformance with Section 19-4.01.

19-2.09 Corridor Protection

Section 4-510 of the *Illinois Highway Code* (605 ILCS 5/4-510) provides a means of protecting the right-of-way for future additions to State highways from future developments through the preparation and filing of a map showing the location and approximate widths of the rights-of-way needed for future additions (see Section 12-6). When the Department intends to invoke this provision, it must hold a public hearing in or near the county or counties where the land to be used is located and must publish notice of the hearing in a newspaper or newspapers of general circulation in the county or counties involved. If a public hearing will be held in conjunction with the location and design studies for a project, it can also serve as the hearing required for

corridor protection under 605 ILCS 5/4-510. As an alternative, the Department may hold a separate hearing specifically to receive testimony regarding the corridor protection map. For any hearing intended to fulfill the requirements of 605 ILCS 5/4-510, the notice(s) announcing the hearing should indicate that intent (see Section 19-4.01(c)). The *Land Acquisition Manual* describes the procedures and exhibits needed to file a Corridor Protection Map.

19-2.10 Accessibility

Executive Order #5 (1979) requires all meetings or conferences conducted by Departments under the jurisdiction of the Governor to be held in a public or private place that is accessible to persons with a disability consistent with the Accessibility Standards prepared by the Capital Development Board unless there are compelling reasons dictating otherwise. The Order further requires that notices advise persons with a disability to promptly inform those responsible for conducting the meeting or conference of their anticipated attendance. Upon notification, meeting organizers shall provide qualified interpreter services for the hearing-impaired and shall make essential materials available in a form usable by the visually impaired as needed.

19-3 DESIGNING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS

Section 19-2.01 quotes the US Code requirements for holding or offering public hearings for Federal-aid highway projects. When hearings are held, the US Code also requires that transcripts must be submitted. For Federal-aid highway projects, these transcripts are submitted to FHWA with the Final Environmental Impact Statement or recommendation for a Finding of No Significant Impact, in accordance with 23 CFR 771, FHWA's "Environmental Impact and Related Procedures."

23 CFR 771.111 provides that each State must have procedures approved by FHWA to implement a public involvement/public hearing program pursuant to 23 USC 128 (public hearing provisions of the Highway Code) and 40 CFR 1500 through 1508 (CEQ Regulations). States have latitude in designing their public involvement programs provided they meet the requirements of 23 CFR 771.111.

Because Federal requirements do not specify the exact number, format, or timing of the public hearings for all highway projects, the States may determine the need for public hearings and their format. Other public involvement activities may be used where hearings are not specifically required by law or in addition to public hearings. This *Manual* does not provide a fixed format or schedule of public involvement activities because a tailored approach is recommended to fit each project and achieve maximum effectiveness. An early activity of the location team will likely be to design and schedule a public involvement program for the project. The program should be prepared in writing and made a part of the project file. The program may range from personal contacts with affected property owners to a series of formal public hearings. For an individual project, it may involve any one format or combination of formats as discussed in Section 19-3.02. The location team may design other formats when special measures are needed to meet a specific situation and to elicit the greatest response from the public. A public involvement program should be dynamic and flexible. Following the completion of each activity, the district should study the results to determine if the original assessment of the needs is accurate and whether the remaining portions of the program will adequately address those needs. When a change is proposed, revise the written program in the project file accordingly.

19-3.01 Scheduling the Program

Public involvement activities may begin shortly after the initiation of the Corridor Study and continue through the Corridor and Design Study to near the completion of the Design Study Report. The activities may be to gather information from the public, inform the public, confirm the accuracy of information, and determine public reaction. Some formats will require the use of a meeting place in the vicinity of the improvement. Because an inappropriate meeting can have a significant adverse effect on public involvement activities, the district must make available adequate space and meeting facilities for accommodating the public. Facilities of the size necessary to accommodate public involvement activities for highway projects usually are in such demand that making a reservation well in advance of the scheduled use is recommended. |

Accordingly, the location team must develop a proposed schedule for both the Corridor and Design Study and determine tentative dates for conducting public involvement activities. The team should check with the facility operator to determine how early the hall should be scheduled to ensure its availability.

19-3.01(a) Separate Corridor and Design Phases

Federal-aid projects which involve both a corridor phase and a design phase must have, for each phase, at least one public involvement activity that is open to the general public and advertised via local media in advance. If the project bypasses or passes through any city, town, or village, at least one of the involvement activities must be a public hearing with a transcript. (The “open house” public hearing format, which includes preparation of a written record of comments received and views expressed, may be used to satisfy this requirement.) The scope of projects with separate corridor and design phases will often require more than the minimum number of public involvement activities.

The district may schedule public involvement activities to aid in:

- developing alternatives;
- confirming interpretations of previous inputs;
- taking official testimony and comments;
- gathering data on the makeup of neighborhoods, community values, and concerns; and
- obtaining the general public reaction to the project.

Certain information may be more accurate and useful if gained from personal individual contacts without the involvement of larger groups of people. Informal formats are probably most suited to gathering data because they eliminate speaking before large groups and other intimidating characteristics of larger, more formal gatherings.

As the location team begins to develop project alternatives, it may be useful to gain public input on the trade-offs that must be made in choosing among alternatives. This may be obtained through conversations with individuals or small groups. Workshops are also effective in obtaining public input on trade-offs. They must, however, be conducted by experienced, knowledgeable leaders with appropriate materials available so that participants fully understand the project goals and the problems to be addressed.

If a public hearing will be held during the design stage, it is not necessary to do so at the corridor stage. There are occasions, however, when it is beneficial to the Department to have a public hearing with a transcript so that all comments and input can be recorded and addressed officially. The district should consider public hearings when there is significant controversy or emotional issues, organized opposition, or the possibility of legal action. Some members of the public may believe they have not had an adequate opportunity to comment or their comments were not given serious consideration if they are not recorded as a part of a transcript at a public

hearing. In these cases, the holding of a public hearing and the recording of testimony may satisfy a certain segment of the public's need to be recognized.

Subsequent to a decision on corridor selection and prior to initiating the Design Study, it may be appropriate to schedule some public involvement activity to announce the results of the Corridor Study and to explain the activities that will follow during the Design Study. This is especially true if there has been significant public involvement and interest in the Corridor Study.

During the Design Study, the district should involve the public during the collection of data, the development of alternatives, and following final recommendation and decisions. Depending upon the size of the project, only one activity may be necessary at each stage, or multiple activities may be necessary to adequately cover the study area. The project scope and the extent of public interest will determine the need for multiple meetings or other activities during a particular stage of the Study development and the frequency of public involvement. To comply with Section 128 of Title 23 of the US Code, a public hearing must be held or offered during the design phase if one was not held during the corridor phase if the project passes through or bypasses a city, town, or village. However, if sufficient need for a public hearing existed during the corridor stage, that same need will likely exist at the design stage and a second hearing will be required. If the project covers an extensive geographical area so that one hearing will not be convenient for all persons affected, more than one hearing will be required at the design stage.

19-3.01(b) Combined Corridor and Design Phases

Federal-aid projects which involve only a single, combined corridor and design phase may have a wide range in scope and may vary from minor safety improvements requiring no additional right-of-way (Project Report) to the reconstruction of an existing rural roadway or an existing urban street to meet full functional class standards (Combined Corridor and Design Study). For appropriate study types, see Chapter 11. When projects have a large scope and involve additional right-of-way throughout the project length, are known to be controversial, involve significant impacts, or are the subject of organized opposition, the district should conduct a public involvement program with more than the minimum number of activities, including a public hearing(s) or offering the opportunity for a hearing, if necessary, in accordance with Section 19-2.03.

If the project meets the criteria discussed in Sections 19-2.01, 19-2.02, or 19-2.03, the district must include the holding or offering of at least one public hearing in the program. On all other Combined Corridor and Design Study Federal-aid projects, several options for obtaining public involvement are available. On those projects that require no additional right-of-way, the District Engineer shall determine what information shall be released to the news media in the area to inform the public of the project. For those projects that involve additional right-of-way, the District Engineer will have the following options available:

1. Contacts with Individual Property Owners. This option is generally suitable when the project involves acquisition of minimal right-of-way from a small number of property owners (e.g., 10 or fewer). Under this option, the district will contact each property owner from which right-of-way will be acquired and provide them with an opportunity to comment on the project. A representative of the district can make a personal contact or the district may contact owners via certified mail with return receipt. Document personal contacts in a memorandum to the file. If certified mail is used, the letter should describe:
 - the reason for the contact,
 - policy on public involvement,
 - property affected,
 - scope of project,
 - reason for the ROW,
 - scheduling of the project,
 - how to comment,
 - options for commenting,
 - where to get more information, and
 - acquisition procedures.

There should also be a signature blank for the owner. See Figure 19-3A for a sample letter. The district should send two copies of the letter (one original and one copy) by certified mail with return receipt requested, with an exhibit showing the property and the proposed taking, and a self-addressed stamped envelope for returning comments. Make a record of any comments from the property owner (whether contacted in person or by certified mail) and inform the owner of any actions taken to resolve any objections or suggested changes. When public involvement requirements are satisfied by this option, the District Engineer shall determine what information regarding the project should be released to the media.

2. Involvement Activity Open to the Public. This option is generally suitable when the project involves acquisition of more than minor amounts of right-of-way, involves the taking of improvements on affected properties, or involves known controversy, organized opposition, or potentially significant impacts. Under this option, the district will (a) schedule and hold an involvement activity open to the general public and advertised in advance, and/or (b) publish an official offering of a public hearing. At scheduled activities as in (a), a transcript will not be prepared; however, a district representative will record comments from those attending the meeting. If a public hearing offer is published as in (b), a public hearing will be held if sufficient interest is demonstrated. If sufficient interest is not demonstrated, each requester will be contacted, informed of the lack of interest, and offered an opportunity to comment. Make any comments received a part of the project record and include a response in the Report. The district should release information to the news media concerning design approval and contract award.

(UNDERLINED PORTIONS VARY WITH PROJECT)

Location Studies

Illinois Route 1

Illinois Route 2 to Illinois Route 3

Job No.: P-91-000-00

Some County

RE: Property Tax Number 12-34-567-890

Month 1, xxxx

Mr. John Doe

123 S. 4th Street

Some Town, IL 60000

Dear Sir:

Reason for Contact	The purpose of this letter is to notify you that the Illinois Department of Transportation is presently in the preliminary engineering phase of a study for the improvement of <u>Illinois Route 1 from Illinois Route 2 to Illinois Route 3</u> .
Scheduling	This project is one of the projects tentatively included in our Fiscal Year <u>XXXX</u> Program, subject to the availability of funds.
Policy	It is the policy of the Department of Transportation to provide all interested persons an opportunity to become acquainted with highway proposals of concern to them and to express their views at those stages of a proposed project when the flexibility to respond to those views still exists. When a proposed project would have major impacts on the surrounding areas, or where large amounts of right-of-way would be acquired, a public meeting or a public hearing will generally be held. When a project would not involve these conditions, our current practice is to contact each affected property owner directly.
Identify Property Affected	Based upon a review of the <u>XXXX</u> tax records of <u>Some</u> County, you are indicated to be the <u>owner of the property located in the northeast corner of Illinois Route 1 and Illinois Route 2</u> as shown on the enclosed aerial photograph.
Describe Project	The proposed improvement generally consists of <u>widening, resurfacing, rehabilitation, restoration, intersection channelization and traffic signal modernization</u> . The intersection at Illinois Route 2 will be channelized to provide separate left-turn lanes and the traffic signal will be modernized. The roadway will be widened 4 ft (1.2 m) on both sides and curb and gutter provided. The proposed right-of-way that is to be acquired from your property for this improvement is indicated on the enclosed aerial preliminary plan sheet.

SAMPLE LETTER

Figure 19-3A

Reason for ROW	This right-of-way acquisition is needed to <u>improve the corner turning radius at Illinois Route 2.</u>	
How Comment	to	At the end of this letter is an area where you can indicate your comments, if any. You may also request further discussions with us, either via the telephone or in a personal meeting. Please indicate the appropriate response and return one copy to us in the enclosed, self-addressed stamped envelope. We would appreciate receiving any comments you may have by _____ <u>(date)</u> .
Acquisition Procedures	<p>Upon completion of our study, a report will be prepared describing the proposed work and submitted to our Springfield office for approval. After approval is received, we will proceed with the plan preparation and land acquisition phase. In that phase, a representative of the Department will contact you regarding any necessary acquisition.</p> <p>Please note that your response, or lack thereof, will in no way influence the amount of compensation you will receive for your property if acquired as part of the project.</p>	
How to Get More Information	More	<p>If, after reviewing this letter, you have any questions or wish to arrange a meeting to discuss this improvement in more detail, please contact <u>(Contact Person as assigned by District)</u> at 312/884-4100.</p> <p>Very truly yours,</p> <p>District Engineer or District Program Development Engineer</p>
Exhibit & Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope	<p>Enclosure</p> <p>Check the appropriate response:</p> <p>_____ I have no comments at this time.</p> <p>_____ I have noted my comments on the back of this page.</p> <p>_____ I would like to discuss this further in a telephone conversation.</p> <p>_____ I will call you.</p> <p>_____ Please call me at _____ (Telephone Number) (Indicate preferred day and time)</p> <p>_____ I would like to have a personal meeting to discuss this project. (Please call <u>(Contact Person)</u> to arrange date, time and location.)</p>	
Signature Blank Owner	for	<p>_____ Signature of Owner</p> <p>_____ Date</p>

SAMPLE LETTER**Figure 19-3A**

(Continued)

3. Public Hearing or Public Hearing Offer. This option is appropriate when the District Engineer determines the project involves sufficient public interest or organized opposition to warrant a public hearing.

When a project involves the use of temporary easements, this should be considered minor rights-of-way for the purposes of deciding whether Option 1 or Option 2 described above is more suitable. This involvement should establish good public relations with property owners and provide them with an opportunity for project input that could reveal information resulting in a reconsideration of design features.

Where property owners are not readily available, such as when the property is the subject of a trust agreement, use the following process to attempt to notify the owner. Direct a written notice or personal visit to the trust officer, or manager of record, to request him/her to inform the actual owner of a possible need for his property. Attempt to ascertain the name and address of the owner or power of attorney for comments. Include a time limit of not less than 21 days for response in the request. If a response is not received in that time, assume the owner or legal representative is not available or interested in commenting on the project.

If a project does not require the acquisition of right-of-way, does not substantially change the layout or function of the facility or connecting roads or streets, does not have a significant adverse impact on abutting property, or does not otherwise have a significant social, economic, environmental or other effect, then a public hearing is not required and other formal public involvement activities may not be necessary. However, the district must release information to the media announcing the initiation of such a project and the letting of any contracts. As discussed in Section 19-2.07, where a group or series of such projects might be located within a community or limited geographic area, schedule a public involvement activity to address cumulative effects of the group or series as a whole.

19-3.01(c) Projects Not Involving Federal-Aid Funds

For projects not involving the use of Federal-aid funds, the District Engineer will generally follow the same public involvement process as that for projects using Federal-aid funds. When State-only funded projects are subject to restricted time constraints, the District Engineer may elect to implement the following procedures as appropriate:

1. Where no additional right-of-way will be acquired, make releases of information to one or more news media announcing the initiation of studies and/or plans and the awarding of contracts.
2. Where minor amounts of right-of-way will be acquired, contact all property owners from whom right-of-way will be acquired and provide an opportunity to comment on the improvement. A representative of the District Engineer will record and document these comments and address them in the Phase I report. In addition, release information to

one or more news media on the initiation of studies and/or plans and the award of contracts.

3. Where significant amounts of right-of-way will be acquired or the number of property owners is such as to preclude individual contacts, the District Engineer will hold an activity open to the general public and announced in advance (see Section 19-4.01). Record comments received from these public involvement activities and address them in the Phase I Report. In addition, release information to one or more news media on the initiation of studies and/or plans and the award of contracts.

19-3.02 Format Options

19-3.02(a) General

Public involvement activities may utilize a number of formats in providing information to the public and receiving public input. By varying the format, the public may be involved individually in an informal atmosphere, in mock studies where participants may develop tradeoffs between various impacts, in listening to formal presentations of information, and in making comments for the record at a public hearing. Some of the formats provide for more than one of these relationships. The district should select the format for an activity according to the situation. Many prefer an individual contact that will not require speaking before large groups. When there is organized opposition, a verbatim transcript may be necessary to accurately record comments received and information given. The following provides a description of several acceptable formats with some guidance on the appropriate selection.

19-3.02(b) Group Briefings

Informal meetings with special interest groups, service clubs, and neighborhood associations can be a very effective means of circulating factual information on a proposed project and gaining valuable input. Such meetings might be similar in format to those used during the data collection stage when members of the location team conduct interviews in the community to gain information on current planning of government and businesses and community values in sensitive social and environmental areas. These meetings generally begin with a brief presentation by a member of the location team giving the background and goals of the proposed project, a summary of the work and decisions made to date, and a brief synopsis of the proposed schedule for completing the improvement. After this presentation, the meetings should be "open" for a question-and-answer period. This type of interaction will often eliminate undesirable speculation, provide considerable insight into the concerns of the community and the types of issues that must be addressed to minimize opposition and controversy, and provide a forum for gaining community support. Because these types of meetings will generally be attended by a relatively small number (12 to 15 persons), a personal relationship can be established with those in attendance and the level of intimidation usually associated with larger groups will be eliminated.

The location team should react to or arrange for invitations from groups such as:

- service clubs (Kiwanis, Rotary, etc.);
- city councils;
- County Boards;
- Chambers of Commerce;
- homeowners associations;
- League of Women Voters;
- local and regional planning agencies;
- State officials in whose district the project is located;
- environmental organizations; and
- minority organizations.

Where there may not be an existing organized group, a neighborhood leader may need to be identified, or the district may arrange the meeting. For example, in neighborhoods without homeowners associations, a particular homeowner may agree to act as a leader and arrange for meetings and attendants to discuss the project with representatives of the Department. If this option is unavailable, the district may arrange a meeting in the neighborhood or community and invite homeowners, businessmen, community leaders, etc., in small groups at different times to discuss the project.

This format has been used very effectively to gather data and ascertain community attitudes and values towards transportation projects, acquisition of properties, rerouting of traffic, interruption of services during construction, preservation of archaeological and historic properties, and the extent of concern for certain types of environmental and social impacts. Where a certain interest group may be impacted more severely than others by a project, a special meeting at a mutually acceptable time and place may be effective in gaining its understanding of the complexities of the issues, ascertaining the nature of its resistance, and determining mitigation procedures which might resolve certain objections. Meetings of this type tend to diffuse organized opposition, especially when the opposition is based on non-factual data.

The Open Meetings Act (5 ILCS 120/1 et seq) provides that a “meeting” of a “public body,” as defined in the Act, must be open to the public unless it is covered by exceptions detailed in the Act. The Open Meetings Act also stipulates public notice requirements for meetings of a “public body.” If a group or organization invites district staff to attend a meeting to make a presentation or participate in discussions, the district is not subject to compliance with the Open Meetings Act for its involvement in the meeting. However, if the district initiates arrangements for meeting with a specific group(s) to discuss project issues, it may need to provide notice of the meeting in accordance with the Open Meetings Act. Districts should contact the Office of IDOT Chief Counsel for guidance when questions arise on applicability of the Open Meetings Act to specific situations. If the district makes staff available for presentations to some groups or organizations, it should be prepared to accept invitations from other groups or organizations if they desire a similar opportunity.

As a part of the group briefing format, use small displays and/or handouts to supplement the presentation. Displays must be relatively small and portable because they may be used in facilities with limited space. Handouts containing basic project information will be useful for orientation and for future reference by attendees.

19-3.02(c) Open House

An open house offers the public an opportunity to meet with representatives of the district at a time and place that is reasonably convenient to discuss a proposed project. An open house may use any space that is readily available to the public and in the immediate area of the proposed improvement. Throughout the open house session, appropriate members of the district staff will be available to discuss the project with the public and answer questions.

An open house has a number of advantages in specific cases:

- It provides an informal setting that allows for responding to individual questions that may not be of general interest.
- It is responsive to the public at the grass roots level and does not depend upon assessments of public opinion by elected officials or other recognized leaders.
- Due to the hours of operation, an open house is available at convenient times for those who are interested.
- The absence of possible pressure or intimidation from groups or neighbors tends to motivate individual participation.
- An open house is effective for obtaining information where there are no established leaders or officials in the affected neighborhood or community.

An open house can make use of a wider range of public meeting facilities than those activities that involve larger groups. It can take advantage of a conference room in a courthouse or other government buildings or the mall area of a shopping center. Where there are available storefront buildings in commercial areas or shopping centers, the district can make arrangements to utilize these facilities for a short duration. School facilities might also be used, particularly on weekends. For increased mobility and flexibility, a van or trailer placed in one or more locations near the project may also serve as an excellent facility for an open house.

Districts should schedule the hours of operation for an open house to allow convenient access by interested parties. In some cases, a time period covering the afternoon and early evening (e.g., from 1:00 PM to 6:00 PM) may be sufficient and, in others, a longer period (e.g., from 10:00 AM to 10:00 PM) may be appropriate. If a heavy turnout is expected, it may be appropriate to schedule the open house for more than one day or even at several different

locations. It might also be appropriate to schedule and announce that certain Department experts will be available for questions at specific periods. Shorter time periods may be appropriate for smaller, non-controversial projects; however, at least a part of a shorter schedule should cover a non-working time period (i.e., after 5:00 PM).

Prepare displays and handouts for use during an open house. Displays in general do not need to be large because they normally will be viewed from relative short distances. Plan and profile sheets and aerial photography with superimposed design and location features are suitable for open house displays. Because presentations are not normally made, handouts may include a brief status report on the project and a tentative schedule for further involvement activities and completion of the project. Handouts are effective and allow individuals to later reaffirm the information gained.

An open house is generally accompanied by notices published in the paper and releases of information to the other media announcing the opportunity to discuss the project with Department personnel, to ask questions, and to submit comments. The notice should specify the time and place of the open house and all open houses if there will be more than one. If certain Department experts will be available only at limited times, the notice should specify that information. Publish notices in accordance with Section 19-4.

19-3.02(d) Workshops

Workshops are meetings where participants are given basic transportation requirements, economic and design constraints, and anticipated social, economic, and environmental impacts all related to a proposed project or project problem, and are then asked to study the problem and suggest a solution. In a workshop format, participants are requested to analyze the provided information, identify impacts that may have been overlooked, work with others with whom they may agree or disagree, and offer solutions and explanations on their suggestions.

Workshops provide an opportunity for the public to experience the complexities and problems that confront Department personnel during project development. As such, this enhances public understanding and appreciation of the Department effort. Because the public will be analyzing pertinent information and suggesting solutions to problems and indicating preferences among impacts and tradeoffs, a sense of existing local values and preferred mitigation measures can be gained.

When workshops are announced in the news media, the announcements must clearly explain that those attending the meeting will be expected to participate in study groups. The announcement should also explain that formal comments or testimony will not be taken, but that other opportunities will be offered for that purpose. At the beginning of the meeting, the same information must again be clearly explained to those present.

Although not always controllable, workshop formats are generally more effective if the participants are limited to a number which can be divided into smaller groups of from four to eight per group, and the number of groups are consistent with available space and manpower.

Because those attending workshops will be expected to participate for 2½ – 3 hours, they must be scheduled at a time when attendants will have the time available. Weekday evenings or daytimes during weekends are most effective. Workshop meeting places should have tables and chairs, good lighting, and other facilities appropriate for the work groups. School cafeterias usually offer excellent facilities for workshops.

At the beginning of a workshop, the moderator should explain the goals and objectives of the session. If other activities have been scheduled subsequent to the workshop, those should also be announced so the participants will be aware of subsequent opportunities to comment on the project. The moderator should explain the project background for the workshop. This includes an explanation of the project need, the basic constraints under which the project will be designed (economics and design criteria), the impacts that have been recognized to date, and any other information that may be pertinent to the scope of the workshop. This presentation must be concise because most of the available time should be allotted to problem solving and solution development. The opening presentation should generally be 30 minutes or less. Divide the participants into groups of four to eight people. Provide each group with the data and exhibits needed for its work, and assign each group a resource person or group leader to answer questions and provide general guidance to the group. The leader may also exercise informal group control, act as group recorder, and report group conclusions. Each group will be expected to provide a recommendation and an explanation.

Workshops should be announced in accordance with Section 19-4.

For workshops or other public involvement activities involving the formation of small working groups, certain practices can be applied to optimize the effectiveness of the working group process:

1. When explaining the purpose and role of the working group, emphasize that the group should function as a “horizontal” organization (i.e., members of equal standing) rather than a hierarchical organization. A horizontal organization will enhance the productivity, creativity, participation, and commitment among the group members.
2. The group must recognize and understand that, to be effective, it must have a common focus and agreement on *what* will be discussed and *how* the discussion will progress. Designation of a group facilitator is key to accomplishing this objective. (Facilitators may be paid personnel hired by the Department or the project consultant.) The facilitator will serve as a neutral agent in the process who will function to keep the participants focused and on track in working toward agreement on specific issues (rather than allowing the group participants to attempt to address multiple issues simultaneously). He/she will direct the flow of discussion to promote open and balanced participation and will protect

individuals and their ideas from personal attacks that can stifle participation. At the outset of the group's formation, the roles and responsibilities of the facilitator and group members must be made clear so all understand how the group will function.

3. Designate a recorder for the group. Like the facilitator, the recorder will act as a neutral agent and will not judge the comments or suggestions offered by group members. The recorder will write down the main points and ideas expressed by the group in a format that can be viewed by all group members as discussions proceed (e.g., large sheets of paper on which the ideas and comments can be written with felt-tip markers). The recording of discussion points in full view of the group serves to focus attention and ensures complete and accurate documentation of the ideas and comments expressed. This "group memory" is important both for the efficiency of group meetings (e.g., it eliminates the need for group members to be preoccupied with the process of recording) and for reporting on the actions of the group.
4. The seating arrangement can affect small work group functioning. The recommended arrangement has the group members seated in a semicircle facing the facilitator and recorder. This helps to focus the attention of the group on the facilitator and the written record of comments and ideas. It also avoids placing any of the group members in perceived positions of authority (e.g., at the head of a table) relative to other members.

19-3.02(e) Informational Meetings

Informational meetings are informal public gatherings that blend the individual discussions of open houses with the group interaction of public hearings. They include an informal, individual discussion period characteristic of an open house, a formalized presentation, a group question-and-answer period and, if questions still remain, another informal discussion period. Generally, a transcript of the meeting is not recorded, but notes of the comments and questions are made.

Informational meetings provide an opportunity to assemble a large group at one time to discuss the status of the project, the decisions made to date, the options yet to be decided, and the criteria considered critical for the remaining decisions. Informational meetings involve only the limited time commitment of a single evening; however, they approximate the informality and personal communication traits of all-day open houses. The limited time commitment may, however, result in some members of the public being reluctant to make comments due to the presence of other members of the community.

In preparing for an informational meeting, the district should make arrangements for a meeting room with sufficient space for the anticipated audience size. Staff all unlocked entrances so handouts can be distributed and an attendance sheet signed for records and future contacts. If large, the room may require amplified speaking equipment for satisfactory acoustics. The room should also contain space for discussion centers.

The presentation should explain the format of the meeting and introduce experts available for questions in specific areas. When relocations are necessary, Land Acquisition representatives should always be available to discuss relocation assistance and property acquisition procedures. The discussion of the project itself should include:

- the reason for project initiation;
- the constraints in the area of economics and design limitations;
- the advantages and impacts of each alternative, including environmental impacts;
- any decision or conclusions reached, remaining decisions, and options to be made by technical staff;
- a tentative schedule for project completion; and
- an explanation of the information or input expected from the public as a result of this meeting.

Although there are no required legal statements, one of the discussion centers should address land acquisition.

The presentation may use displays, slides, or other visuals, or it may use a coordinated slide-tape or videotape program. The presentation should not generally exceed 30 minutes but in no case should the presentation exceed 45 minutes. (See Section 19-5.03 for additional information.)

If the displays will be used during the presentation, they should be visible from all positions in the room. If slides are used, the screen should be sufficiently large, and it should be positioned for good visibility. Videotape presentations may require multiple monitors for proper visibility. Handouts are effective and, if they contain maps or drawings, may be used during individual discussions. If duplicates of major displays and slides (such as alternative alignments or typical sections) are contained in handouts, attendees can make notes during the presentation and use them for future reference. Supply the discussion centers with suitable drawings and exhibits to reduce dependence on those used for the presentation. Each discussion group should have a resource person to answer questions and provide information, and a recorder should be available to note the questions and comments received. These notes will be used later to analyze the results of the meeting.

Generally, the announcements and notices for an informational meeting will be in accordance with Section 19-4.

19-3.02(f) Information Exchange (Citizen Working Groups/Advisory Committee)

For complex projects, districts may consider establishing an "Information Exchange" to assist in identifying and focusing concerns and comments from a diverse array of interests. The Information Exchange involves the formation of Citizen Working Groups to analyze and react to project alternatives, impacts, and other project-related issues and an Advisory Committee to serve as the focal point for receiving comments and recommendations from the Working Groups and passing them to decision-makers.

In using this approach, the district must make clear, through formal Constitutions and Bylaws, that the Working Groups and Advisory Committee are not intended to make any final project decisions. Rather, they will provide a forum for discussion and comment on various project-related issues to assist the Department and other decision-makers. The following discussion presents an overview of the key elements of the Information Exchange process:

1. Working Groups

In the Information Exchange process, Working Groups form the key mechanism for eliciting discussion and comment on the proposed project. These Groups are formed on the basis of common interests (e.g., public officials, public interests, agricultural interests, development interests) and have the following primary objectives:

- Evaluating alternatives presented by the Department and discussing and commenting on impacts, analysis factors, and evaluation methods.
- Assessing the relative merits of the alternatives, identifying advantages and disadvantages of the alternatives, and suggesting ways to make the alternatives more acceptable.
- Informing the Advisory Committee of the Groups' evaluations, assessments, concerns, and suggestions.

The issues and interests on a specific project will affect the nature and number of Working Groups that may be appropriate. As the initial step in establishing Working Groups, organizations and other interests likely to see themselves as potentially affected by the project should be identified and contacted to determine their interest in participating. The district may solicit interest through any of the various methods used for public involvement. For public officials or organizations representing specific interests, letters of invitation to those entities may be appropriate. For the public at-large, informational meetings (or some form of public notice) may be a more effective method of alerting potentially affected parties and determining interest.

The notification should include the name and address of the contact person to whom responses will be directed and should also explain the purpose of establishing the Working Group(s) and how they will function as a part of the Information Exchange. The notice should indicate that,

after obtaining an indication of the level of interest, an organizational meeting will be scheduled to provide more detail on the Information Exchange process and to formalize the working groups.

At the organizational meeting for the Working Groups, the Information Exchange process and the objectives of the Working Groups and Advisory Committee can be further explained. In addition, the district can determine the membership in each Working Group, present and adopt Constitutions and Bylaws, and initiate selection of a Group chairperson and vice chairperson to represent the group on the Advisory Committee. Following the initial organizational meeting, the adoption of Constitutions and Bylaws, and the designation of chairpersons, the Working Groups can proceed with their activities and exchange information concerning Working Group and Advisory Committee meetings, project details and schedules, etc., through their representation on the Advisory Committee.

2. Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee will include two representatives from each of the Working Groups (the chairperson and vice chairperson of each Group), the Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, and the project consultant, as appropriate. The functions of the Advisory Committee include integrating the interests and values of the Working Groups into the planning process, advancing the objectives of the Information Exchange, and managing the overall process. The objectives of the Advisory Committee include the following:

- Providing policy direction for the Information Exchange.
- Evaluating alternatives for the project based on information provided by, but not limited to, public meetings/hearings; deliberations of Working Groups; consultant reports, as appropriate; and FHWA and DOT inputs.
- Recommending alternatives for the project.
- Preparing a formal report to the Secretary of IDOT detailing the work of the Committee and including its recommendations and conclusions.

Tasks performed by the Advisory Committee in accomplishing its objectives will include actions such as:

- Evaluating the need for the project.
- Evaluating the social, economic, and environmental impacts of project alternatives.
- Serving as a communication link to the Working Groups and bringing their concerns to the decision-makers (i.e., IDOT, FHWA, and public officials).

- Helping to resolve conflicts among various interests.
- Reviewing and making recommendations on the decision-making process.
- Assisting in educating the public about the proposed action and the decision-making process.

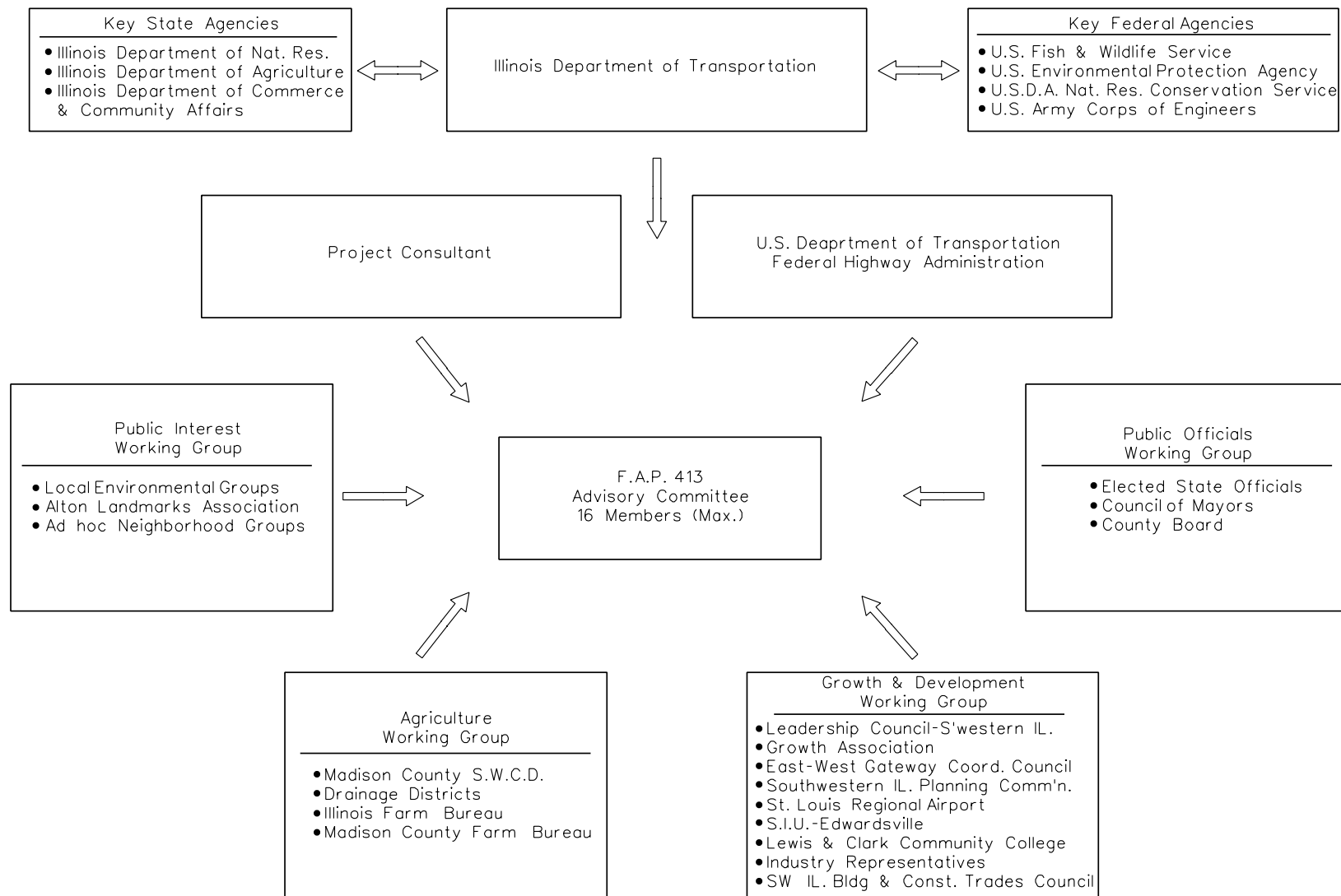
Figure 19-3B illustrates an example structure for the Information Exchange process. BDE can provide interested districts more detailed information upon request on implementation of the Information Exchange concept on IDOT projects.

19-3.02(g) Formal Public Hearings

Formal public hearings are proceedings conducted by appropriate officials of the Illinois Department of Transportation in the more traditional public hearing format to inform the public of proposed projects or programs, to explain the options under consideration, and to receive and document public reaction. This format generally has a speaker(s) addressing a large audience. Members of the audience in turn have an opportunity to address the speaker(s). Because of the size of the audience, the program must be structured allowing for very little informal exchange of information (see Figure 19-3C). The US Code requires that, if a public hearing is held, a transcript of the proceedings must be recorded. This transcript can be advantageous because it eliminates conjecture and interpretation. Recording the proceedings may be by court reporter or electronic means. A variety of governmental agencies have extensively used the formal public hearing format, and the public is generally familiar with the process and the role expected of them.

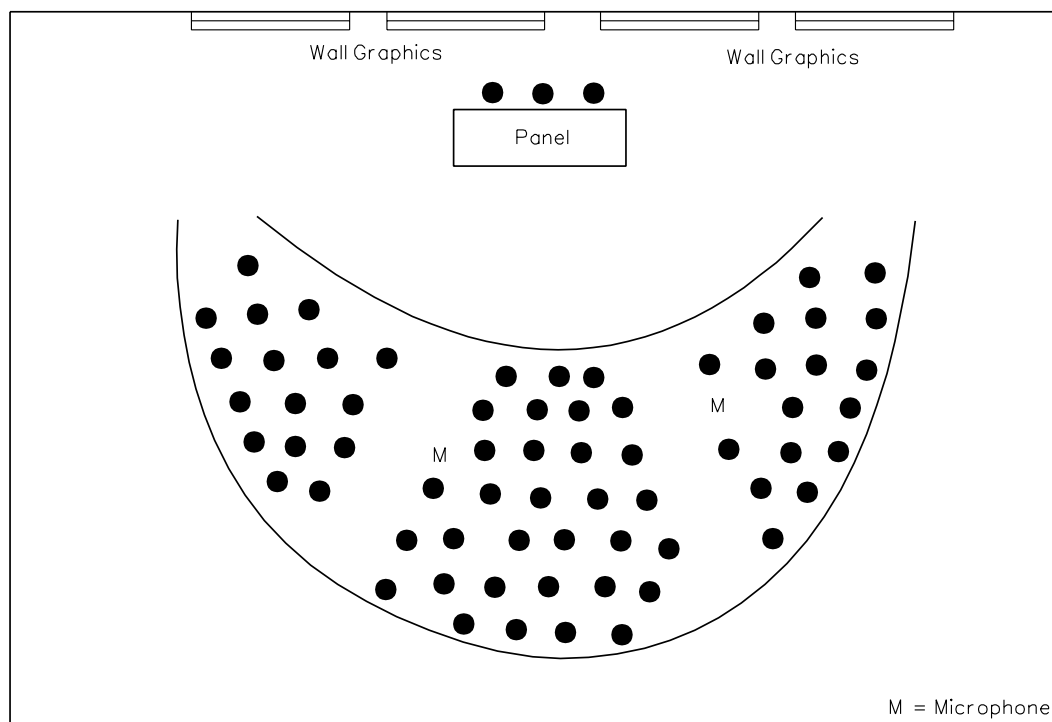
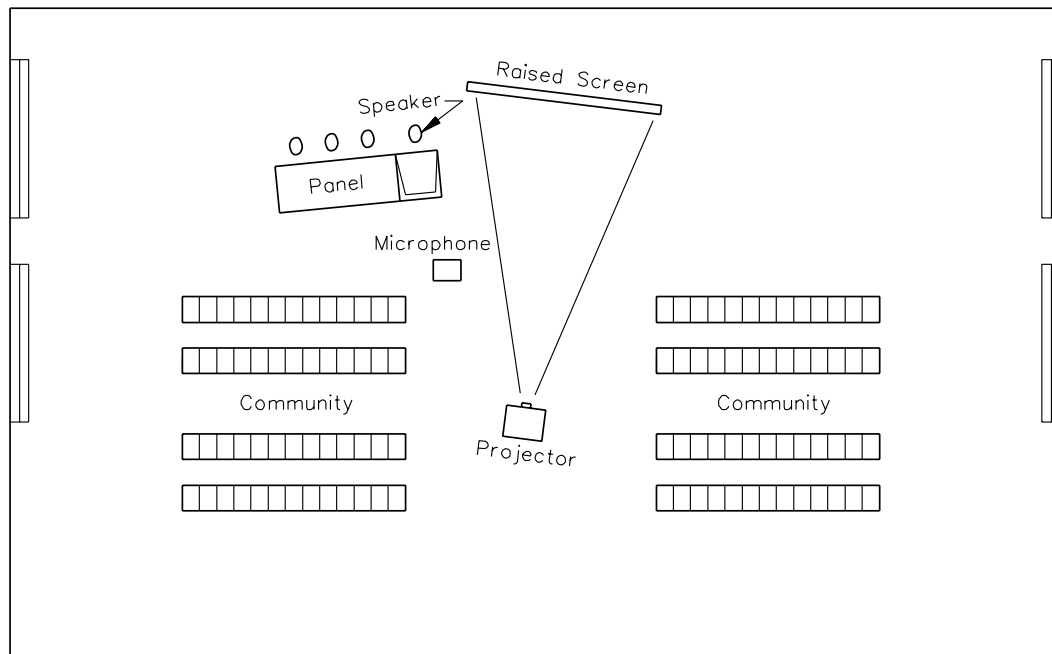
Formal public hearings can discourage participation by certain persons or groups that are intimidated by the formality and size and/or make-up of the audience. Conversely, formal public hearings may attract individuals that are seeking a forum, which often includes press coverage, to present their views on transportation matters and a variety of other topics. As such, the moderator may need to caution attendants occasionally to restrict their comments and statements to the project and may need to suggest a time limit for each commenter (e.g., 5 minutes) to discourage individuals from attempting to monopolize the comment period.

Formal public hearings generally require considerable time for preparation of displays and presentations. This often results in costs greater than those for other public involvement activities. When a hearing is held to comply with Federal requirements, the expenses are necessary to ensure that the project will qualify for Federal-aid. Otherwise, the need for a public hearing should be determined considering project impacts, project controversy, available lead time, and cost effectiveness.



EXAMPLE OF INFORMATION EXCHANGE PROCESS

Figure 19-3B

**FORMAL PUBLIC HEARING FORMAT****Figure 19-3C**

Public hearings often involve a larger gathering than other public involvement activities. To ensure the availability of a facility of adequate size and equipment in a suitable location, public hearings should be scheduled well in advance. Occasionally, the availability of a desired facility may influence the scheduling of a hearing. If a single public hearing is proposed, generally, it should be in the evening when the majority of the public is available. If a series of public hearings is proposed, then hearings may be held at various times during the day and at various locations throughout the project area.

The presentation opening the formal public hearing should normally not exceed 30 minutes and in no case should it exceed 45 minutes. The district staff should carefully develop the discussion and only address important points (see Section 19-5.03(b)) because time is limited. Type and follow the text carefully, so the time limit is not exceeded and to ensure that the required statements are included. The presentation may use a variety of formats including live talks, live talks with exhibits, videotape or slide-tape combinations, or segments involving a variety of presentations. See Section 19-5 for further information on the development of presentations.

Considering the size of the meeting room(s) and the audience to be accommodated, the district staff should size and position displays for good visibility throughout the room. If slides are used, the screen should be sufficiently large so that the printing on the slides is legible from the back of the room. Handouts are considered an effective tool for distributing information to the public. To coordinate information presented at the public hearing with handouts, exhibits in the handouts should be similar to those displayed at the hearing.

When an exceptionally large attendance is expected, it may be desirable to conduct several activities concurrently. If separate rooms are available at the hearing facility, a special room may be used for receiving testimony from persons having prepared statements for the record and who are not interested in attending the entire hearing. After the presentation is complete, comments can be recorded in the main hearing room also making two recorders available for statements. If such a process is used, it should be announced both prior to and at the public hearing. Indicate that both recordings will become an official part of the record. Although some duplication of comments may occur, the shortening of the time involved at the public hearing may make the duplication acceptable.

Many of the comments expressed at public hearings concern right-of-way acquisition. The district may address these concerns by establishing a separate room or discussion center staffed with Land Acquisition personnel to dispense general information and to discuss property acquisition procedures, relocation assistance programs, and effects on individual properties. By satisfying property-related questions prior to or during the presentation, this may minimize the number of questions asked during the public hearing. Because Land Acquisition personnel should generally be available throughout the hearing, the separate, integrated use of such personnel is both effective and efficient.

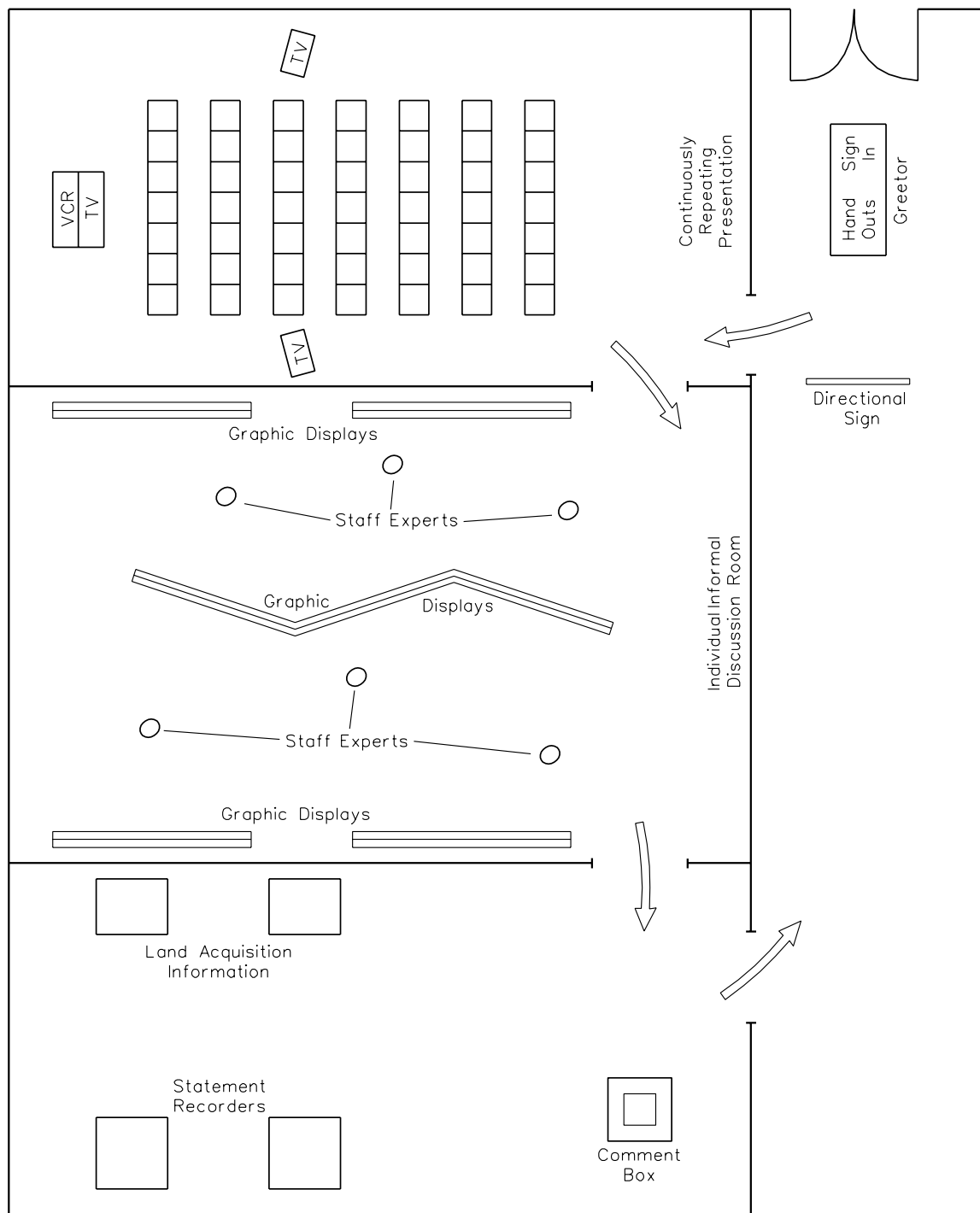
Announcements and notices for a formal public hearing should be according to Section 19-4.

19-3.02(h) Open House Public Hearings

The open house public hearing format is an alternative to the formal public hearing format and may be used wherever a public hearing is required or appropriate. It remains necessary, however, to have appropriate Department representatives present, to provide explanatory project information, to provide for the receipt of oral and written statements, and to prepare a transcript of the proceedings. The open house public hearing format provides for a continuous flow of visitors over a period of hours in contrast to a formal public hearing that attracts a large crowd at a fixed time. The smaller number of visitors present at any given time at an open house public hearing allows personalized service through staff discussions with individuals. Most of the advantages described in Section 19-3.02(c) for open houses are also applicable to open house public hearings. Surveys of participants in public activities for IDOT highway projects have indicated that the open house public hearing format is generally viewed more favorably than the more formal, traditional format. The open house hearing format is less intimidating to participants and offers a more workable option for conducting hearings for very large audiences. FHWA has recognized the benefits of this format and encourages its use as an effective public involvement method that meets the hearing requirements of the US Code.

Open house public hearings generally involve four separate activities:

1. The first is the greeting station. Here, staff members greet the public, advise them about hearing procedures, distribute handouts, obtain names and addresses, and note the opportunity to submit oral and written statements. The handout may include forms for submitting written comments during or after the meeting.
2. Next, the visitors are directed to a presentation of general information about the project to orient them on the purpose of the project, alternatives under consideration, and the major project features. This is best accomplished by electronic means such as slide/tape or videotape presentations that can be repeated without variance.
3. After receiving a general orientation, the district staff directs the visitors to an area with graphic displays and staff experts for small group or individual discussions on specific questions or concerns. A variety of disciplines should be represented so virtually any question can be addressed. Members of the public are free to remain in this area as long as necessary to obtain the information they desire. Staff members should remind visitors of the opportunity to submit comments at the conclusion of discussions.
4. The final activity is an opportunity to give oral comments to recorders or prepare and submit written comments. After completing their comments, visitors are free to leave. A typical setup for an open house public hearing is shown in Figure 19-3D.



OPEN HOUSE PUBLIC HEARING FORMAT
Figure 19-3D

Open house public hearings generally require considerable time for preparation of displays and electronic presentations. The need for slides and/or videotapes and the possible need for outside media services for the development of electronic presentations may require additional lead time. The displays for the individual discussions do not necessarily need to be large because they will generally be viewed from relatively short distances. The hearing may include aerial photography with superimposed design and location features, but preliminary plan and profile sheets may also be suitable. Where visual impacts are a major concern, the district may wish to also provide exhibits produced through video imaging, computer imaging, or photomontage, which depict how alternatives will look in the project setting.

The district should investigate and reserve meeting facilities early to ensure the availability of a suitable room arrangement. Open house public hearing formats need a controlled entrance so that greeters can effectively guide attendees. A separate room is desirable for the orientation presentation so the sound does not interfere with the individual discussions. If a separate room is not available, screening is helpful. Preferably, the orientation room will be near the entrance and before the discussion area to encourage a natural flow in the proper sequence. In the discussion area, staff members should be clearly identified and should initiate discussions with attendees. The district may wish to identify and staff a fixed location for providing special expertise on matters such as land acquisition. If space is available, locate recorders for oral statements in a separate room or screened area to reduce interference from the other activities.

Announcements and notices for open house public hearings should be according to Section 19-4. Because the general public may not be familiar with the open house format, certain features should be described in the notice. The notice should specifically state the open house format will be used and all information and presentations will be available throughout the time period specified.

19-3.02(i) Non-Meeting Activities

Preceding subjects have addressed various public involvement activity formats that require interaction or meetings between district personnel and the public. This discussion will address those activities that do not require such actions. Non-meeting activities are not intended to replace meeting-type activities but are intended to supplement or bring attention to other meeting-type involvement activities. This *Manual* presents only a general discussion; detailed procedures may be obtained from other sources:

1. Opinion Polls. Opinion polls contact people in their homes or places of business and request information from them on specific topics. The polls may consist of mailing a questionnaire, telephone contacts, or personal interviews. They may seek out or address specific groups such as those living in a specific geographic area, those who work in a specific area, or those who belong to certain organizations. Mail-type polls may result in a response as high as 65%-80% with proper administration; however, such polls rely on the public's initiative to complete a questionnaire, their interpretations of the

questions, and their ability to express their own views. Contacts such as those made by telephone or personal interview result in a greater response and information that is more valuable and usable. Telephone polls are more expensive than mail, and personal interviews are more expensive than telephone polls. Contact BDE for more information on the use and administration of polls.

2. Newsletters. For major projects or programs of projects, it may be appropriate to prepare a periodic newsletter to inform the public of the progress of the project or program. Newsletters can be distributed to all residents in a given geographical area so they have the opportunity to be aware of the project. A newsletter can also stipulate the name and address of persons to contact for additional information. If a separate newsletter is not practical, place articles in the newsletters of other organizations and agencies. BDE has on file newsletters that have been prepared for various IDOT highway projects. Districts interested in obtaining copies should contact BDE.
3. Brochures and Handouts. Information printed as brochures or pamphlets can be distributed widely throughout a community affected by a proposed project. These publications may be used to distribute information or bring attention to other public involvement activities that may have public interest. The brochures may include opinion polls or questionnaires to be returned to the district office. Brochures and handouts may be distributed in public places, such as stores, public buildings, and civic centers, or throughout specific work areas or neighborhoods. They may be directed toward specific groups such as those using bus stations, parking lots, or shopping centers.
4. Television and Radio Appearances. Many urban areas have radio or television stations that offer public service announcements or public interest programs as part of their regular programming. Where this service is available and desired, appearances on these shows can be an extremely effective forum for discussing a proposed project in the area served by the stations. Discussions on the show may serve as a vehicle for dissemination of information or as an interest builder for future involvement activities in the area.
5. Cable T.V. Cable T.V. companies normally set aside one channel for public service. The availability of using this service may vary among companies. Options may range from entering an announcement on public hearing activities to the presentation of a film or tape on the proposed project. Reruns of public hearing presentations may also be offered on such channels in some locations.
6. Toll-Free Telephone. This activity may be used in conjunction with any or all of the other activities. Announcements to the public for upcoming involvement activities may include a statement concerning the availability of a toll-free telephone number to call. Personnel staffing the toll-free number should be generally familiar with the project. If a question is raised which cannot be answered immediately, make provisions for return calls with answers.

7. Signs and Billboards. Signs can be placed on project right-of-way announcing scheduled public involvement activities. It is one means of notifying highway users who are not from the immediate area. Exercise care to avoid unnecessary visual clutter and to ensure removal immediately following completion of the activity. Signs may be more effective in rural areas due to reduced competition from other signs.
8. IDOT Internet Site. Districts may wish to include project-related announcements on the IDOT Internet Site. Procedures for including district information on the web site are available on the IDOT Intranet at <http://idotweb/resources.asp>.

19-3.02(j) Combining Activities

The preceding subjects have discussed the use of various public involvement formats as a single activity. By combining certain activities, the individual advantages may be compounded for maximum benefit. This discussion will offer suggestions for maximizing the effectiveness of involvement activities by combining different formats. The suggestions are not intended to be exclusive but rather to serve as examples and stimulate ideas. Other potentially effective combinations may be incorporated into public involvement programs:

1. Open House with Periodic Presentations. The format of an open house inherently requires repetition of information to satisfy basic inquiries on the project. Announcements of an open house may include a statement that a brief presentation of general information will be made at periodic intervals such as on the hour or the half-hour. These presentations should not be longer than 5 or 10 minutes. An effective option is to tape this presentation or use a repeating videotape or movie.

Presentations may be limited to coverage of specific topics such as right-of-way acquisition or environmental impacts. Appropriate district staff must be present to discuss the topic in depth. Individuals interested in more detail on specific topics can then attend at specific times. Notices of the open house should specify topics and times.

2. Recording Comments at Activities Which Are Not Public Hearings. It may be advantageous to provide a verbatim record of some or all input at public involvement activities for subsequent reference to questions raised, information disseminated, or comments received. This process will also ensure those making statements that their comments will be recorded as given. Verbatim recordings may intimidate some persons that might wish to provide comments. The district staff may provide an alternative means of documenting comments in addition to the verbatim recordings to accommodate these individuals.
3. Spontaneous Workshops. When open houses, group presentations, or informational meetings are scheduled, certain attendees or groups may wish to engage in some form of problem-solving activity. If space, appropriate materials, and expertise for resource

leaders are available, a spontaneous workshop may be initiated. Make a record of findings and conclusions for further evaluation. The district staff can serve as a resource and discussion leader and record the comments and proposals that are made for future use by the location team.

4. Formal Public Hearing with Informal Sessions. In conjunction with scheduling a formal public hearing, the notice may state that district staff will be available for a period of time before and after the formal hearing to answer individual questions and discuss the proposed project. In this manner, individual questions that may be raised during the hearing and placed on the record can be answered individually, thereby shortening the length of the hearing and the transcript. Also, the advantages of offering an informal, personal contact activity with a formal public hearing format can be combined into a single session.
5. Combination of Meeting and Non-Meeting Activities. Meeting-type activities can use public gatherings advantageously by distributing questionnaires in addition to or as part of the regular handout. Questionnaires distributed at public meetings can be explained to recipients and usually have a higher percentage of return than those received through the mail. The information obtained at the meeting should simplify completion and serve as a stimulus for follow-through.

Including in the handout a form for submitting comments can encourage written comments. The form should have appropriate data for identifying the project, space for comments, and blanks for the name and address of the person submitting the comments. The District Engineer's name and address should be printed on the back. Include instructions for folding the sheet into thirds, taping it shut, and mailing. Department experience has demonstrated that this format is very effective.

6. Radio and TV Opinion Polls. Use of radio and TV to conduct opinion polls through hot-line telephones often is an excellent means of generating interest, increasing attendance at public involvement activities, and obtaining useful information.

19-3.03 Locating Involvement Activities

A critical aspect of designing a public involvement program is the selection of appropriate locations and facilities for accommodating the involvement activities. The district staff should consider several criteria in the location and selection of facilities for involvement activities; however, the standards vary for different activity formats. These criteria are:

- size,
- availability of equipment,
- location,
- accessibility to aged and persons with a disability,

- comfort,
- availability,
- cost, and
- acceptability to all segments of the public.

Two of these criteria must be met for all involvement activities regardless of format — availability and accessibility to the aged and persons with a disability. The standards for the remaining criteria vary according to the size and duration of individual activities and the makeup of the entire involvement program. For example, open houses do not normally require a large meeting room, nor do they require surroundings that are especially comfortable because the attendance period is relatively short. Acceptability to ethnic groups is not critical for a given activity if the involvement program, as a whole, provides an equal opportunity for input through activities in other locations. Succeeding subjects will address the application of the criteria to specific formats.

Executive Order #5 (1979) requires that meetings or conferences be held in a public or private place that is accessible to persons with a disability in a manner consistent with the Accessibility Standards prepared by the Capital Development Board (CDB). Inspect potential sites to determine if they meet CDB standards. A site evaluation form is available from the Department of Human Services to aid in the inspection. A site that fully complies must be used unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary, such as inadequate capacity, ethnic objections, and/or unacceptable geographic location. If a fully accessible site that meets other mandatory criteria is not available, one which meets the other mandatory criteria and which most nearly complies with the Accessibility Standards should be used. Factors such as comfort, minimum cost, and availability of audio-visual aids or equipment may be compromised when persons with a disability are expected to attend and fully accessible sites with such features are not available. Information on potential meeting sites in specific geographic areas is available from the Department of Human Services field offices.

19-3.03(a) Number of Locations

The district will select the number of locations based on the geographic area affected by the project, the availability of adequate transportation for those affected, and reasonable travel distances for the public expected to attend the involvement activities. In rural areas, it is adequate to hold a public hearing or other public involvement activity in each county traversed by the project.

In urban areas, the determination of needs is more difficult. In low-income neighborhoods, many persons depend upon public transportation. Accordingly, it may be a burden for these individuals to attend involvement activities outside of their immediate neighborhood. Residents of racial minority or ethnic neighborhoods may be reluctant to travel outside their neighborhood, especially to another racial or ethnic neighborhood. Where minority or ethnic neighborhoods are of considerable size, it may be appropriate to hold individual involvement activities in each

affected neighborhood. Where neighborhoods are relatively small and without apparent mobility problems, it is usually appropriate to hold one involvement activity for multiple neighborhoods.

Before confirming facility locations for public involvement activities, the following three questions should be satisfied:

1. During their normal activities, do residents of the area affected by the project normally travel the distances that will be required to attend the public involvement activity?
2. Is transportation available to those interested for travel to the facility during the time the involvement activity is scheduled?
3. Are there any social impediments that could affect travel to the area or neighborhood scheduled for the involvement activity?

19-3.03(b) Selection of Facilities

Other criteria that should be considered when selecting a facility for a public involvement activity are listed below. Most are self-explanatory; however, the discussion of individual formats in Section 19-3.02 offers some insight into the application of these criteria:

- size and capacity,
- equipment,
- comfort,
- cost,
- accessibility, and
- parking.

19-3.03(c) Examples of Suitable Locations

Presentations for Groups:

- organization's regular meeting place,
- community center,
- schools,
- restaurant,
- motel or hotel meeting rooms,
- private company meeting rooms or offices,
- individual's home, and
- district office.

Open House:

- van,
- trailer,
- storefront building,
- courthouse rotunda,
- central area of shopping mall,
- civic center,
- Chamber of Commerce meeting room,
- City Council chambers,
- judicial courtroom, and
- district office.

Workshops:

- school cafeteria or classroom,
- hotel or motel meeting rooms,
- restaurant (during off-peak hours),
- civic center, and
- service club meeting hall.

Informal Meetings and Public Hearings:

- schools (gymnasium, auditorium, cafeteria, or classroom);
- civic center;
- City Council chambers;
- judicial courtroom;
- service club or other social club meeting hall; and
- any meeting hall generally used by the public.

19-3.04 Examples of Suitable Involvement Programs for Project Types1. Resurfacing:

- news releases announcing inclusion in program and award of contracts.

2. Widening and Resurfacing:

Conditions:

- rural or urban currently carrying State route marking,
- some minor additional right-of-way required, and
- no public hearing or offer required.

Program:

- open house or informational meeting when feasible alternatives determined, and
- news releases announcing inclusion in annual program and award of contract.

3. 3R Project on State Route or Major Bridge Replacement in Rural Area:

Conditions:

- generally follows existing alignment with limited relocations to correct substandard conditions,
- right-of-way required throughout improvement or significant amounts at relocations,
- no significant environmental impacts,
- no apparent controversy,
- no additional through lanes, and
- may involve runaround or marked route detour.

Program:

- open house or informational meeting when feasible alternatives determined, and
- news releases at inclusion in annual program, beginning of study, and award of contracts.

4. Program of Small Projects, in Localized Area, Proposed for Single Construction Season

Conditions:

- including resurfacing, railroad crossing improvement, traffic signals; and
- lighting, intersection improvement (no right-of-way).

Program:

- open house or informational meeting or radio/TV talk show, and
- news release of inclusion in program and award of contract.

These projects may be discussed at an involvement activity warranted for a single project. If so, the activity notices should so indicate.

5. Upgrading to Four or More Lanes by Adding Through Lanes In Rural Area

Conditions:

- no requirement to hold or offer hearing,
- additional ROW required,
- possible environmental impacts,
- change in function, and
- some relocation to meet standards or avoid developments.

Program:

- open house or informational meeting near end of data collection to check adequacy of other data and add information on local values (may require more than one if improvement traverses significant portions of more than one county);
- group presentations to special interest groups or others who show an interest in progress of project;
- open house or informational meeting to describe work completed to date, explain options to public, and receive public comment (may require more than one meeting if improvement crosses significant portions of more than one county); and
- news releases to announce initiation of study, results of public involvement activities, inclusion in annual program, and advertising and award of contract.

6. Upgrading to Four or More Lanes by Adding Through Lanes or Establishing One-Way Couple In Urban Area

Conditions:

- public hearing to be held or offered,
- right-of-way may or may not be required,
- possible environmental impacts,
- change in function and layout,

- may use streets not carrying marked State route traffic, and
- bypass may be option in smaller communities.

Program:

- open house or information meeting near end of data collection to check adequacy of other data and add information on community values (may require more than one);
- group presentations to city council, chamber of commerce, neighborhood associations as requested, service or social clubs as requested, any other special interest group requesting presentation; and
- workshops will be useful in developing alternative alignments, designs, and mitigating features when there is organized opposition and/or significant controversy. Workshops should specifically include members of all opposition groups and other interested individuals.

If significant issues remain unresolved:

- hold formal public hearing with informal sessions before and after or open house public hearing to get overall public reaction to unresolved issues.

If significant issues basically resolved:

- hold informational meeting or open house to explain project options and obtain public reaction and offer public hearing.

7. Major New Facilities such as Interstate or Freeway in Rural or Urban Area

Conditions:

- requires the holding or offering of a public hearing,
- involves significant environmental impacts, and
- involves significant additional land acquisition.

Program:

- Major projects may require separate Corridor and Design Studies; however, public hearings are not necessarily required during both Studies.
- Open houses or informational meetings held during data collection phase to obtain information on community values and affirm adequacy of other data.

- Group presentations to:
 - City Councils of communities involved,
 - county boards of supervisors,
 - elected State officials representing an affected region,
 - neighborhood or community associations,
 - chambers of commerce,
 - special interest groups,
 - service or social clubs, and
 - other groups as requested.

(Presentations are recommended for local public officials whether or not requested. Other groups may be scheduled for presentations at their initiative or district initiative).

- Workshops, open houses, or informational meetings are recommended during the development of alternative designs, alignments, and mitigation features. Workshops are often effective in developing compromises among the various factions opposing or favoring the improvement. An "Information Exchange" (see Section 19-3.02(f)) also can be an effective way of focusing discussion and comment among diverse interests.
- An open house or informational meeting should be held after development of study alternatives and a public hearing offered or a public hearing (formal or open house) held to obtain public reaction to final options.
- Use of radio/TV talk shows may be helpful in developing interest in involvement activities and informing segment of public not likely to attend meetings.
- Newsletters may be effective when the project scope is sufficiently large to require multi-year study. Newsletters may also be used to announce the result of involvement activities.

News releases should be issued regularly during the duration of a Study to announce new developments, upcoming involvement opportunities, and the results of involvement activities. Each of the above activities may require more than one repetition depending upon the size and impact of the project and the scope of the opposition and controversy. The makeup of the Study area may influence the number of involvement activities. The above program should be repeated at the Corridor and Design Study phases if both are required.

19-4 NOTIFYING THE PUBLIC

Section 19-3 discusses criteria for the development of a public involvement program for a given project. After the makeup of the program has been determined, the district must decide how to transmit information to the public so it will be aware of the opportunities for involvement in project development. In preparing an announcement for a public involvement activity, decisions can be facilitated by addressing the following questions:

- Who should be contacted?
- How often should they be contacted?
- When should they be contacted relative to the timing of the activity?
- What activities should they be informed about?
- What information should be released about the improvement and the activity?
- How large a geographic area should be covered by the distribution of the announcement?

The following sections discuss these topics.

19-4.01 Announcements of Involvement Activities

Generally, activities to which the public is invited (e.g., open houses, workshops, informational meetings, public hearings, open phone lines) should be advertised via the news media, posters, mailing lists, or other media as needed. General announcements are not normally required with presentations to specific groups and other activities which the general public is not expected to attend; instead, a group requesting a presentation will arrange for attendance. When the district initiates the presentation, it will arrange for attendance through appropriate invitations. There may be occasions where the group involved will release the results of these meetings to the media. Clubs or other special interest groups may have a standard practice of issuing a news release summarizing the activities and programs that occur at their meetings. Occasionally, the district may announce the results of certain non-public activities. For example, the results of opinion polls or questionnaires may be of interest to the general public and appropriate for general release.

19-4.01(a) Timing and Number

Each public involvement activity will be the subject of a minimum of two notices to the public. More than two notices may be published if a special effort is needed to ensure an adequate public response or if there is considerable public interest in the project.

The first notice of a public hearing on a project requiring an EIS shall be published at least 30 days in advance of the hearing. The first notice of a public hearing on a project requiring an Environmental Assessment/FONSI or a Categorical Exclusion, and the first notice for all other public involvement activities, shall be published at least 15 days in advance of the hearing/activity. In all cases, the second notice shall be published 3 to 7 days before the activity. If notices in addition to the two required notices will be beneficial, they may be scheduled up to two months ahead or during the week preceding the involvement activity.

Another announcement which should be used where available is a listing of the activity in a community calendar or other similar service in news media that lists activities and meetings of general interest that occur on that day or the following day. Some newspapers have notices of important events to occur on that day on the front page. Community calendars or public service announcements are fairly common in both electronic and print news media, are generally free, and should be used where available.

The unique circumstances surrounding a particular project may affect the timing of notices. If a project requiring an Environmental Assessment/FONSI or a Categorical Exclusion is known to be controversial or the subject of organized opposition, the district should consider extending the minimum 15-day public hearing notice timing to 30 days. Extension of the timing for the notice is not necessary on these projects if an informational meeting, or other mechanism that will assist the public in obtaining project information and preparing for the hearing, precedes the hearing.

19-4.01(b) Distribution

Before steps are taken to notify the public, the district must determine which groups or sectors will be contacted and what means or media are most appropriate. When identifying groups to be notified, consider several general categories. Those who live in the geographic area of the project and may be affected are one category. Another category is groups who are known to be or are likely to be directly affected by property acquisition. Potential users of the facility are another interested group. If a route is heavily used by commuters, these users likely will be concerned with the effect of alternative routing both during and after project construction. Owners of businesses along a route may be concerned about accessibility. Other groups may be singled out for attention because of special communication needs. This sector could include ethnic neighborhoods, low-income neighborhoods, the aged, non-English speaking individuals, and persons with a disability.

Once the proper recipients of project information and interaction have been identified, the next action is to determine the most appropriate means of announcing the involvement activity. It is *not* necessary to publish legal notices of upcoming activities. Paid advertisements in newspapers and on radio and television are acceptable and frequently more effective. The Office of Public Affairs is available and should be contacted for aid in the preparation of photo-ready displays to reduce the costs of using paid advertisements. Where local news media are reluctant to carry such advertisements, a legal notice may be one means of ensuring verbatim publication and specified timing. It may also be necessary to advertise notices in more than one newspaper or on more than one radio or TV station to provide adequate coverage.

In predominantly ethnic or non-English speaking neighborhoods, it may be appropriate to publish a notice in a foreign language newspaper. Newsletters of various clubs and organizations may also provide an effective means of notifying specific groups. A local chapter of a state or national association, a church, the Chamber of Commerce, or a service club may publish periodic newsletters and may be agreeable to including announcements of upcoming public involvement activities free of charge. Translations of notices and project documents will be made available when large numbers of non-English speaking residents will be affected by the project.

It may be appropriate to place posters or to distribute handouts or pamphlets on street corners in neighborhoods that are likely to be affected. Announcements of upcoming activities may be mailed to anyone on established mailing lists or to anyone who has shown an interest in the project or in highway projects in general. If low-income and/or minority populations will be affected by the proposed project, special efforts to announce public involvement activities may be necessary. In accordance with Executive Order 12898 "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations," and the ensuing USDOT Order, the public involvement process must be thorough and fully inclusive. It may be necessary to distribute pamphlets or project notices door to door for residents or place notices in churches or other community centers.

Appearances on radio and TV talk shows are also effective in many communities. Copies of all notices announcing upcoming public involvement activities should be forwarded to the Office of Public Affairs in the central office of the Department of Transportation.

19-4.01(c) Content

For an announcement in a newspaper to be effective, it must be strategically located and of sufficient size to attract attention. The announcement should state the type of activity, the purpose of the activity, and the time and location. It should state that all interested persons are invited to attend and participate and should also state that district personnel will be present to receive input, provide information, and answer questions. The announcement must include a description of the proposed improvement and a reference to any significant encroachments into base flood plains, significant impacts on wetlands, and possible road closures. If noise |

abatement measures are being investigated for potential implementation as a part of the proposed project, the notice also should include a statement to that effect. If the activity is a public hearing and is intended to meet the requirements of Section 4-510 of the *Illinois Highway Code* (605 ILCS 5/4-510) on corridor preservation (see Section 19-2.09), the announcement should indicate that the hearing will afford an opportunity to provide testimony on a map showing the location and approximate widths of right-of-way needed for certain future additions to the highway system in accordance with the cited section of the *Highway Code*.

On District One projects outside of the City of Chicago, notices must also indicate that the Division of Highways will process a permit for construction in a regulated floodway whenever such permits are required for the project. The announcement must indicate that EISs or Environmental Assessments and engineering reports will be available for inspection at the activity and prior to the activity at the District Office.

When individuals or businesses will be relocated, the notice must state that right-of-way acquisition and relocation assistance information will be available. It should further indicate the name, address, and telephone number of the person to contact to obtain additional information. Show the fax number for the District Engineer's office and the district's telecommunications device for the deaf (TTY) number in the upper right-hand corner of the announcement.

Where possible and economically feasible, a map should be included to further define the area affected by the project. Identify a contact person and telephone number for the news media in the upper right-hand corner. This may or may not be the same person listed in the body of the notice for the public to call.

Announcements of upcoming activities also must contain information on accessibility for persons with a disability. The wording will vary depending on whether the meeting place is:

- fully accessible in compliance with Capital Development Board (CDB) standards,
- partially accessible but not in full compliance, or
- not accessible.

The following applies:

1. When the meeting site fully complies with CDB Accessibility Standards, the meeting notice should contain a statement similar to the following:

This meeting will be accessible to persons with a disability in compliance with current Accessibility Standards prepared by the Capital Development Board. Persons with a disability planning to attend and needing special accommodations should contact the person listed in this Notice by (date 5 days prior to meeting). The contact may be by telephone, in writing, by fax or by telecommunications device for the deaf (TTY).

2. When the meeting site contains wheelchair access to the meeting room but does not fully comply with CDB Accessibility Standards (because of inadequate rest room facilities, inadequate number of designated accessible parking spaces, etc.), the notice should contain a statement similar to the following:

Persons with a disability planning to attend this meeting should contact the person listed in this Notice by (date 5 days prior to meeting) to advise of planned attendance. The contact may be by telephone, in writing, by fax or by telecommunications device for the deaf (TTY). If special accommodations are needed, the contact person should be informed at the time of contact. The meeting room is accessible to persons with a disability.

When notified that a person with a disability plans to attend the meeting, the district should advise that person of the meeting site's general areas of noncompliance with the Accessibility Standards. The person should also be informed that a suitable, fully accessible site was not available.

3. When suitable facilities that allow access to the meeting room for persons with a disability are not available, the notice of the activity should contain a statement similar to the following:

Persons with a disability desiring to participate in this activity should contact the person listed in this Notice by (date 5 days prior to meeting) to make arrangements for participating. The contact may be by telephone, in writing, by fax or by telecommunications device for the deaf (TTY).

When contacted, the district should advise the person with a disability that fully accessible facilities suitable for this activity were unavailable in this geographic area. The person with a disability can then be offered alternatives for involvement in the development of the project. These alternatives may include the following:

- A representative(s) of the district may come to the person's home or place of business to discuss the project.
- A mutually acceptable accessible facility may be selected for a meeting.
- Arrangements may be made to lift or convey the person with a disability to the meeting room. (This may not be possible in some instances.)

Other options mutually acceptable to the person with a disability and the district may be used.

Figure 19-4A presents an example of an announcement of an upcoming activity.

Fax: 416/343-6414
TTY: 217/524-4875

Media Contact: David Hall
Ph.: 416/343-6437

Informational Meeting

Scheduled by
Illinois Department of Transportation
For Improvement of U. S. Route 52 near Central City

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) announced today an informational meeting has been scheduled for 7:00 P.M. on September 22, 1998 in the Central City High School Gymnasium for the purpose of discussing the improvement of U. S. Route 52 from its intersection with Main Street east to the corporate limits of Central City. All persons interested in this project are invited to attend the meeting. Persons with a disability planning to attend this meeting should contact the individual listed below by September 17, 1998, to advise of their planned attendance. The contact may be by telephone, in writing, by fax, or by telecommunications device for the deaf (TTY). If special accommodations are needed, the contact person should be informed at the time of contact. The meeting room is accessible to persons with a disability.

The meeting will be conducted on an informal basis. A brief presentation on the status of the project, the proposals under consideration, and the decisions to be made will begin at 7:00 P.M. Representatives of the IDOT will be available from 6:00 P.M. until the presentation and also after the presentation to discuss the project. The IDOT representatives will answer individual questions and record comments offered by those in attendance. Verbatim comments will not be recorded. The presentation will address topics such as the need for the project, the design alternatives under consideration, right-of-way acquisition and relocation assistance, and the tentative construction schedule. One alternative under consideration involves a potentially significant encroachment on the Salt Creek flood plain. The Division of Highways will process a Permit For Construction in a Regulated Floodway for the replacement of the bridge over Salt Creek. *(A statement concerning permits for construction in a regulated floodway is required only for District One projects outside of Chicago.)* Preliminary reports, including an environmental assessment and an engineering analysis with drawings, maps, and aerial photography, will be available for inspection and viewing during the entire time the IDOT representatives are present. This same material currently is available for review and inspection at the District office at Richland.

For more information, contact George Robertson, District Engineer, 1200 East Main Street, Richland, Illinois 62673, telephone 416/343-6420, fax 416/343-6414, TTY 217/524-4875.

ANNOUNCEMENT EXAMPLE

Figure 19-4A

19-4.01(d) Offer of Public Hearing

When regulations require a public hearing, but other activities have apparently satisfied the need for public involvement, or when there is no apparent adverse impact or interest in a project, the regulations may be satisfied by publishing a notice in a newspaper offering an opportunity to request the Department of Transportation to hold a public hearing. The district should publish the notice of the offer at least twice, approximately one week apart. More than two notices may be published if it is considered necessary to provide adequate coverage of those affected by the project. Publish the notice in at least one newspaper of general circulation in the vicinity of the project. If a notable segment of the local population is non-English speaking and there is a foreign language paper serving the area, it should also be used to carry the notice. The deadline for requesting a public hearing shall be at least 21 days after the notice announcing the offer first appears in a newspaper.

The notice offering a public hearing should state that a public hearing will be held if sufficient interest is demonstrated. The District Engineer shall make the determination of sufficiency. If sufficient interest is not demonstrated, each requestor shall be contacted by a district representative or by certified mail with return receipt and informed of the lack of sufficient interest. The district shall also advise the requestor that comments are welcome. If a personal contact is made, record comments during the contact. If the contact is by certified mail, include a stamped, self-addressed envelope and a name, telephone number, fax number, and telecommunications device for the deaf (TTY) number for returning comments. Use the fax number for the District Engineer's office and the district's TTY number. Address any comments received in the Corridor, Design, or Combined Study Report.

The offer of a public hearing need *not* be announced by a legal notice in the legal notice section of newspapers. Public hearing offers can be announced by use of paid advertisements in newspapers and may be supplemented by radio and TV announcements, posters, or other means. Legal notices may be used if it is the only means to ensure verbatim publication and specified timing. The size of paid advertisements should be sufficient to attract attention and to contain the information that is necessary. Contact the Office of Public Affairs for aid in the preparation of photo-ready display advertisements to reduce the cost of using paid advertisements. Public hearing offers should normally contain the following information:

- Proposal and project description, including a reference to significant encroachments in flood plains and significant impacts on wetlands.
- Information concerning the preparation and availability of EIS's and EA's.
- An invitation to the public to request a hearing.
- The name and address where requests should be sent.
- The time limit available to submit a request.

- An announcement that data are available for viewing and inspection including the name, address, telephone number, fax number, and TTY number that should be contacted for arranging to view that information and to obtain other information desired.
- A map showing the location of the improvement.
- A contact person and telephone number for the news media in the upper right-hand corner.

Figure 19-4B presents an example of a typical offer of a public hearing.

19-4.02 Mailing Lists

Each district should develop and maintain mailing lists for distributing information. A general mailing list should include agencies, organizations, and appropriate individuals that are generally interested in being advised of all highway projects scheduled within the district. The general list consists primarily of Federal, State, and local agencies usually interfacing with the Department on highway projects; entities such as major industries, environmental groups, and local transportation operators; and individuals, including elected officials, who have requested and have a need for project information. To serve the intended purposes, those included in the general list should be sent copies of announcements of public involvement activities and other general information as appropriate. Confirm names and addresses periodically to keep lists current and to determine whether the parties are still interested in receiving project information.

In addition to a general mailing list, the district should develop specific lists for individual projects. These project-specific lists include the general mailing list and any additional persons or groups that are interested in specific highway projects. Individuals and organizations may be added to the list when requests are received for information on a specific project or on the basis of attendance lists that are maintained as part of involvement activities. These lists may be used to distribute information on the resolution of certain problems discovered during involvement activities. The project-specific mailing lists may be retained for use with other planned projects in a particular area, or they may be discarded following completion of the project for which they were developed.

19-4.03 General Releases of Information

Releases of information to the news media can be a very effective tool for minimizing adverse public reaction during both the daily operations of the Department and the development of proposals and final plans for specific projects. Maximize effectiveness by writing the release in layman's terms and avoid using jargon and technical terms as much as possible. Releases of information involving the routine operations of the district may be at the discretion of the District Engineer. Releases of information on activities which are controversial or in which the

Secretary has shown an interest, such as major freeway projects, should be coordinated with the Office of Public Affairs. That Office also may initiate releases of information in response to inquiries from the news media or to address a demonstrated public interest. It may also release information concerning involvement activities for projects of Statewide interest when advised of their scheduling. All releases of information should include, in the upper right-hand corner, a fax number, a TTY number, and the name and telephone number of the person the media may call for additional information.

Fax: 416/343-6414

TTY: 217/524-4875

Media Contact: David Hall

Ph.: 416/343-6437

Public Hearing Offer
by
Illinois Department of Transportation
concerning
Improvement of U. S. Route 52 near Central City

The Illinois Department of Transportation is proposing to improve U. S. Route 52 from its intersection with Illinois Route 1 to its intersection with Main Street in Central City. The project will consist of reconstructing the existing two-lane pavement to provide four lanes, two in each direction, separated by a 14-foot (4.3-m) painted median. The project will include the signalization of the intersections of U. S. Route 52 and Illinois Route 1 and U. S. Route 52 and Main Street. Curb and gutter and underground drainage will be provided as a part of this project. Alternatives under consideration have potentially significant impacts to Moore's Slough, approximately 0.5 miles (0.8 km) east of Illinois Route 1. An Environmental Assessment has been prepared for this project.

Any interested person who believes a public hearing should be held for this project may request that a hearing be held by contacting George Robertson, District Engineer, 1200 East Main Street, Richland, Illinois 62673, telephone 416/343-6420, fax 416/343-6414, TTY 217/524-4875. To be considered, requests must be received by September 23, 1998. A hearing will be held if the public demonstrates sufficient interest.

Maps, drawings, aerial photography, the Environmental Assessment and other information are available for viewing and inspection by the general public in the District office at the above address. If additional information is desired, contact the District Engineer.

PUBLIC HEARING OFFER EXAMPLE

Figure 19-4B

19-5 PLANNING THE MEETING

This Section will discuss the process for planning an individual activity, whether it is an open house, an informational meeting, or a public hearing. The planning activities have been divided into four subsections — Pre-Meeting Activities, Preparation of the Meeting Site, the Presentation, and Post-Meeting Follow-up.

The district must carefully prepare and develop public involvement activities not only to attract and hold the public's attention but also to create a pleasant atmosphere for discussion of highway projects.

19-5.01 Pre-Meeting Activities

Suggested criteria for selecting a site for an involvement activity and the kinds of materials and equipment that may be necessary have been previously described. The following information provides additional guidance on the meeting preparation once the meeting site has been selected and the timing of the activity has been set.

19-5.01(a) Inspecting the Site

Before district personnel begin the preparation of exhibits and presentations, inspect the selected meeting site. A rough drawing of the shape of the room(s), noting the approximate dimensions, may be helpful. Note other features such as stages, projection rooms, light switches, electrical plug-ins, microphone jacks, entrances, and exits. The person(s) conducting the inspection of the meeting site should also note whether there are other rooms available for possible use for tape recording public statements or in answering individuals' questions concerning right-of-way, relocation, and acquisition. This inspection may be combined with the accessibility inspection discussed in Section 19-3.03.

The person(s) conducting the inspection should examine any equipment that the facility will provide to ensure that it is in good working order and that district personnel are familiar with its operation. Public address systems and slide projectors should be provided special attention. At the time of the site visit, if practical, discuss with the facility manager arrangements for setting up tables and chairs and for bringing equipment to the meeting room on the day(s) of the involvement activity.

When conducting the site inspection, the district representative(s) also should evaluate whether signs will be needed outside or inside the meeting facility to direct participants to the involvement activity.

19-5.01(b) Preparations at the District Office

During the course of developing a public involvement program, the district generally will have gained some insights on the profile of the potential audience. The knowledge of which sectors of the public are likely to attend, what they are likely to expect, and their likely positions may be helpful in selecting a format for the involvement activity that will be most effective.

The notices of upcoming public involvement activities will instruct persons with a disability needing special accommodations to contact the district by telephone, in writing, by fax, or by TTY to advise of their anticipated attendance and any special needs. The district contact person should be prepared to answer questions regarding the accessibility of the meeting site and should complete a Request for Accommodation form (available from the Department of Human Services) for each contact with a disabled individual. If interpreters for hearing-impaired persons or materials for visually impaired individuals have been requested, make every effort to provide the requested services. The Department of Human Services has produced a Directory of Sign Language Interpreters that contains a partial listing of interpreters in Illinois. Additional information on interpreters and Braille sources is available from the central and field offices of the Department of Human Services. The district may prepare tape recordings of printed materials when Braille materials are unavailable or not acceptable.

If the involvement activity will include a period for questions or informal discussion, the persons responsible for providing information at the activity should be prepared to respond to anticipated questions. Informal "brainstorming" sessions in advance of the activity may be helpful in generating possible questions that may be asked.

When developing handout materials, in many cases some material from previous involvement activities or previous projects may be usable. For example, information regarding right-of-way and relocation assistance will remain essentially the same. For new materials that will be developed, schedule appropriate lead time for preparation of displays and written materials and for printing handouts. Allow sufficient lead time for printing and other preparation activities whether the work will be performed commercially or by the Aerial Surveys Section or the Printing and Duplicating Section in the central office. Review any activities requiring action outside the district office to determine the proper lead time for completion.

The district office may prepare the photo-ready copy for notices of public involvement activities or may request assistance from the Office of Public Affairs or the Aerial Surveys Section. After the notices have been sent to the newspapers, the district should ensure that the notices appear in the papers at the specified time.

All personnel who will be expected to participate in the involvement activity should be familiar with the format, schedule, objectives, and any applicable time constraints for their participation. This includes the moderator, if one will be used, who may or may not be an employee of the Department of Transportation. Presentations for the involvement activity should be prepared in accordance with Section 19-5.03.

A checklist is an excellent tool for ensuring that final preparations do not overlook required equipment and supplies such as slide projectors, displays, and handouts or reminders to involved personnel. Spare equipment and parts such as extra bulbs for projectors, a spare slide screen, extension cords, and other emergency equipment can be extremely valuable in keeping the meeting on schedule in the event of equipment failure.

19-5.02 Preparing the Meeting Site

When all personnel have reached the site and set up the equipment supplied by the district, make a final check to ensure that all equipment, especially that furnished at the site, is operational. Set up a table at each entrance that will be used for access into the meeting room. The table(s) should be used for registering attendants and for distributing printed materials. Assign personnel to each table to handle the registration and to direct attention to the available handout materials. Entrances not used for the meeting should be locked and signed. Place other signing, as determined necessary in accordance with Section 19-5.01 at the meeting location. Set up displays as previously planned and orient them with North in the same direction in each.

19-5.03 The Presentation

19-5.03(a) General Requirements

Public participation and attitudes may depend upon how well the personnel conducting the activity understand and react to the public's viewpoints and reasons for participation. With the proper approach, both the public and the Department can use the involvement activity to benefit its interests.

A frequently overlooked element that is important to the overall success of the involvement activity is the time required for completion. Normally, an audience will tolerate a two-hour meeting. With this time frame, limiting the presentation portion to 30 minutes (40 minutes on major projects) provides sufficient time to discuss the basic features of the proposed improvement while recognizing the participants' desire to have questions answered with as little delay as possible. To conform to the time allotted, carefully prepare and review the presentation to ensure that only necessary information is included. Practice sessions are helpful for allowing the presenter to fit the presentation to the scheduled time limits. When more than one person will be involved in the presentation, complete a practice session(s) with all of the presenters prior to the actual presentation at the involvement activity.

Most of the people attending a public involvement activity will not be familiar with the technical language associated with highway projects. Those making presentations at the involvement activity should minimize the use of technical terms in their presentations and in their responses to questions. The personnel conducting the involvement activity should convey an attitude of friendliness, understanding, respect, and cooperation to promote a positive atmosphere for the

involvement activity. If non-English speaking persons are expected, it may be appropriate to provide oral and written information in more than one language. If visually impaired persons will be attending the activity, it may be appropriate to have the information from the handout materials available in Braille or on tape.

19-5.03(b) Content

Presentations for public involvement activities should follow basically the same outline and address the same general topics. The selected approach may vary somewhat, and the exact nature of the data presented may vary from activity to activity depending upon the anticipated participants. The following paragraphs discuss the general topics that should be addressed in a presentation and provide some insight on the manner in which the topics should be approached.

The opening speaker or moderator should first welcome those in attendance and explain the purpose of the activity. The welcome should be sincere and friendly. The opening remarks are extremely important for they may set the tone for the entire activity. Those in attendance should understand from the explanation of the purpose whether they are providing input into the basic data gathering effort or whether they are involved in choosing between alternatives. The opening speaker should also explain the format to be used. The speaker can describe what is involved in a workshop, an informational meeting, or a public hearing, and the method that will be used to record comments.

The moderator should introduce all staff participants and district representatives and describe their role in the program. The public must be made aware that those with the expertise required to address their questions are present. If staff participants will be available for informal questioning after the presentation and formal comment period (if one is being held), the speaker may also indicate where the various experts will be located during the informal discussion period. At this time in the program, remind the audience of handouts (if available) and briefly describe the contents of the handout. If exhibits used in the presentation correspond with information in the handouts, attendants may use the handouts as a presentation supplement to their benefit.

At this point, the presentation should describe the project in appropriate detail. If the purpose of the meeting is to collect data, the description should briefly outline the work that is proposed and then describe the type of information that is desired from the participants. If the project is further advanced and the participants are expected to offer information concerning the development of alternatives, the description should include a discussion of some of the work completed to date. If the involvement activity occurs when the project is in an advanced stage and the purpose is to provide information that will facilitate a choice among alternatives, provide more information to indicate the status of the improvement and the scope of the options or alternatives that remain. It should include descriptions of design features and beneficial and adverse impacts.

Often when describing a project to the participants, it is helpful to use examples of similar design in the immediate area of the proposed project. For example, in describing the type of medians that are under consideration, the speaker should emphasize that the median types being considered are similar to the flush painted median as now exists on Main Street, or a curbed-barrier median as now exists on Broadway. The participants can thereby relate directly to an operational situation with which they are already familiar.

Another topic that should be addressed during the meeting presentation is the tentative schedule for the remaining steps in the project. The public should be apprised of future opportunities to participate in the development, when the Design Study Report will be completed, when construction will be initiated, and when construction should be completed. If construction is not scheduled during the current fiscal year, explain that priorities may vary with future funding levels, crash experience, required maintenance effort, and changes in traffic volumes.

A subject that should be briefly discussed is the acquisition of right-of-way and the availability of relocation assistance. If the purpose of the activity is to offer choices among alternatives, then information should also be available which would indicate the approximate right-of-way takings and the properties affected. Advise interested property owners of whether they will be affected and to what extent. Explain that individual questions concerning the acquisition process and land acquisition personnel will answer the availability and limitations of relocation assistance during the informal period. Indicate where the land acquisition personnel will be located during the informal period. Discussions of land acquisition processes that involve more than a statement of availability should be brief and in proportion to the overall time limit of 30 minutes.

If a public hearing is held to satisfy the requirements for a road closure hearing, the discussion should include a statement of need for road closings, the needs of local traffic, and the effect of the closing on other highways in the locality. The discussion should further address access to schools, churches, markets, and trade or community centers. Discuss all anticipated impacts and benefits of various closing options.

The last portion of the presentation should address the procedure that will be used during the formal comment period if included in the meeting. If there are time limitations on speakers or other procedures to be used, the participants should be aware. Remind the audience that Department personnel will be available at discussion centers to answer individual questions after the formal part of the presentation is complete. If any activities are occurring in a separate room, the participants should be reminded of them. Before closing, announce that written comments received within 10 days will be included as a part of the hearing transcript or meeting records; however, comments are welcomed at any time during the development of the project. Present the name and address of the person to whom comments should be submitted.

The information described in the preceding paragraphs should be developed to answer as many questions as possible for the participants. Informal pre-meetings or brainstorming sessions as

described in Section 19-5.01(b) may also aid the presenters in determining what information and topics should be included in their talk.

19-5.04 Audio-Visual Aids

19-5.04(a) General

A major problem in developing public involvement activities is how to convey a large amount of technical data to the public in a manner and language that they can understand and in a relatively short time. The majority of those who attend public hearings are unable to understand the technical language and engineering drawings that are typically used by location team personnel in their studies of a particular project. Audio-visual aids are capable of significantly increasing the ability of the public to understand the information being presented at a public involvement activity. As a result, the use of effective audio-visual materials and techniques can be a major asset to the successful implementation of public involvement activities.

Use the following audio-visual aids for public involvement activities as appropriate:

- overhead projector,
- slides,
- motion pictures,
- videotape,
- audiotape,
- large writing pad and tripod,
- fixed exhibits,
- models,
- demonstrations, and
- chalkboard.

Several of these aids may be combined for an even more effective presentation. A coordinated slide and audiotape show is a good example of an effective combination.

Exhibits should remain as simple as practical, omitting contour lines, curve data, and other technical information that may not have meaning to the majority of those attending the activity. Label the exhibits to indicate the project stage such as preliminary, proposed, or draft and, if applicable, to contain a title such as Alternative 1 of 3. Identification of local landmarks shown on exhibits can be helpful in orienting viewers. Common landmarks include major street intersections, rivers, parks, large buildings, etc. They should be identified with large bold letters and should be readable from a considerable distance.

In the preparation of visual exhibits, the use of colors to depict different alternatives or features of the proposal can be important. The colors themselves can elicit emotional responses from the participants. A general rule is to refrain from using strong, bright colors. Bright red, pink,

yellow, green, and similar colors appear objectionable and should be avoided where possible. Colors that appear more satisfactory are medium blue, medium to dark green, golden yellow, and light brown. If one alternative is shown in a particular color on one exhibit, it should be shown in the same color on all exhibits. This is also preferable when examples such as bar graphs are used for quantitative comparisons. If quantitative comparisons are appropriate, a bar graph is one means of demonstrating such comparisons quickly and simply. In general, all exhibits should be simple and as easy to understand as possible.

Another effective means of communicating with the public is the use of examples of similar existing facilities near the project area. In many cases, such examples will be helpful to the public in visualizing the scope of the project and its effects on them individually or as a community. For instance, instead of using a typical section of a proposed arterial street, an example of a local facility that is familiar to the attendees may be more effective. The familiarity of the attendees with the example facility should lead to a better understanding of how the proposed project will affect access to homes and businesses, the amount of right-of-way that might be required, and the vehicular and pedestrian characteristics of the facility. Usually, examples of this nature are superior to technical drawings in conveying a message to the public.

BDE has capabilities for video imaging, computer-imaging, and photomontage. These technologies can be used to produce perspective views of the project setting with project alternatives superimposed to show how they will appear if constructed. These techniques are helpful in explaining how an alternative may alter the project setting and are especially useful in responding to concerns about potential visual quality impacts. Districts may contact BDE to request assistance in producing video-image, computer-image, or photomontage exhibits.

19-5.04(b) Fixed Exhibits

Fixed exhibits are defined as large-size drawings, maps, aerial mosaics, etc., that are prepared for use at public involvement activities to display proposed designs and alignments that are under consideration. Fixed exhibits can be very helpful during public involvement activities because some design concepts and alignments are difficult to visualize from a verbal description alone. Some fixed exhibits may serve a dual purpose in that large-scale maps or aerial mosaics are often prepared for normal use by a location team during the course of its study. Although fixed exhibits are often prepared for a specific purpose and used only once, their use may be increased by photographically reproducing them or using plastic overlays so that alternatives can be drawn on the exhibit or overlays during workshop sessions. Smaller exhibits may be enlarged photographically for use as a fixed exhibit at a public hearing.

Fixed exhibits may also be used effectively in combination with other audio-visual aids at public involvement activities. Because slide presentations have a relatively short duration and require a darkened room, fixed exhibits that duplicate slides can be used for discussion following the presentation. Handouts may also contain reduced photocopies of fixed exhibits. Some fixed exhibits may be retained for future use if they display a standard design or feature that might be

a consideration in another project. Districts can establish a library of reusable exhibits so that standard design exhibits will not need to be prepared for each involvement activity.

Although fixed exhibits are useful and flexible visual aids, they have some disadvantages when compared to audio-visual aids. They require considerable space for displaying, storing, and transporting. Another limitation is the time and expense often required to prepare a large drawing or display.

19-5.04(c) Slides

Slides offer many advantages for use in a public involvement activity. They can be used to display almost any subject and require little equipment and minimal experience to prepare. This permits some experimentation and innovation by the preparers of the slide presentation. The number of slides that can be used at a presentation is controlled only by the time available, which may allow hundreds of slides during a single presentation at a public involvement activity. These presentations are very effective because of the large amount of information that can be disseminated and because of their ability to attract and maintain audience attention.

Slides of actual locations along the proposed project allow meeting attendees to orient themselves to familiar surroundings while the presenter describes the proposed work at each of the locations displayed. They also demonstrate that district staff has been to the project site and are aware of existing conditions. The user can vary slide presentations by using dual projectors and screens to display both an overall view of the project and, on a separate screen, a blow-up showing a particular location and how it will be treated.

Slides are a natural medium for standard presentations such as right-of-way acquisition and relocation assistance, Federal-State relationship, etc. The district can prepare a set of slides and a written dialogue once and use this repeatedly at appropriate public involvement activities. Standard presentations can be made more sophisticated if slides are combined with an audiotape for a coordinated slide-tape presentation.

Slides should be simple so the information they display can be quickly absorbed and understood by viewers. A general rule is that slides should be displayed on the screen no less than six seconds nor more than ten. Constant change creates motion that maintains audience attention, which can be created by using a building-block technique with one basic slide. An example of this is the presentation of a list of items. The first slide shows the title and Item #1. The second slide shows the title and Item #1 with Item #2 added in a contrasting color. The third slide shows the title and Items #1 and #2, with Item #2 now being the same color as the title and Item #1, with a third item now in contrasting color. This technique effectively presents a list of information while emphasizing each item as it is added. Lettering on slides should be sufficiently large to be read by the naked eye while holding the slide to a light. If it cannot be read without magnification, it will probably be too small for use in the presentation. Experience demonstrates that slides are easiest to understand when they contain no more than six lines of

writing per slide. Slides composed solely of written messages are also more effective if they use light or white letters on a black background.

Many options are available for an effective slide program. Equipment is available to use more than one projector on a single screen including equipment that will fade from one slide to the next. Multiple screens and multiple projectors may be used to display more than one slide at a time. Also a coordinated slide-tape program may be prepared with the tape actuating the slide projectors. Districts interested in using equipment not currently available in their office should contact the Office of Public Affairs to determine if the equipment is available. This equipment also can be rented, which has the advantage of allowing experimentation without purchase.

When a slide presentation will be part of a public involvement activity, ensure in advance that the appropriate equipment and facilities are available so the program will not be unnecessarily interrupted. Check items such as compatibility of slide trays and projectors, number and size of screens, and availability of back-up projectors and account for these prior to the meeting. Also, include extension cords, spare bulbs, etc., to minimize the adverse effect of any equipment failures.

19-5.04(d) Videotape and Film

Videotape and film can be practical audio-visual alternatives for public involvement activity presentations. Although their use will usually be more costly and require more expertise than other audio-visual means, they offer advantages that, in some instances, are offsetting. Videotape is somewhat limited in transmitting a variety of information to large groups because of the size of monitors. Videotape is, however, very effective for repetitive showings of the same information to small groups. Movies can be used with an audience size limited only by the size of the facility and screen and the audio capability. This need might commonly occur at open houses and at briefings of small groups such as homeowners or civic organizations. The preparation of videotape or motion picture programs may initially require the purchasing of outside expertise. However, as experience is gained, in-house staff may become proficient in developing these presentations. The Office of Public Affairs maintains information on the preparation of these types of presentations.

Technical movies may be integrated with other audio-visual aids to demonstrate certain design techniques that may be new or not available in the project area for local familiarity. An example of this is demonstrating via film of actual crash tests the effectiveness of a concrete median barrier compared to a guardrail median barrier. The district may obtain technical films demonstrating the effectiveness of specific design features from a variety of sources including FHWA and TRB.

19-5.04(e) Miscellaneous Audio-Visual Aids

There are other audio-visual aids that are not as common as those which have been discussed. Many of these are more applicable to serving special needs that do not commonly occur. The use of models, for example, may not be appropriate on most projects; however, they may be appropriate to demonstrate complicated interchanges or complex urban joint development projects. Demonstrations for use at a public involvement activity are also generally reserved for a special situation. The district may use a demonstration to explain the effectiveness of a specific design feature such as a noise barrier.

Overhead projectors may be used effectively, and they offer many of the advantages provided with slides. They do, however, require constant manipulation by the speaker or an aide, which can detract from his/her effectiveness. Overhead projectors, however, offer the advantages of allowing the speaker to write on the display during the presentation. This may be useful at workshops or informal small group meetings when the speaker may be reacting to input. The use of overhead projectors requires a relatively small investment. Personnel with limited experience can prepare transparencies and other displays at a reasonable cost.

Another visual-aid technique is the use of a large writing pad mounted on an easel and drawn on with felt tip markers. The usefulness of this technique is limited by the ability of the speaker or an aide to draw and sketch as the presentation is being made.

A large writing pad and felt tip markers may be used to record spoken comments. This is in addition to recording comments by a court reporter or tape recorder. This ensures the speaker that his comment is received and interpreted correctly. Large writing pads are also effective at workshop sessions to record comments, interests, suggested alternatives, etc. The working groups usually prioritize these, and they can become a significant source of input for district decision making.

Audiotape is another aid that may be used to present information to the public and control precisely the length and content of a talk. Audiotape is useful in the preparation of standard presentations that are repeated, such as those concerning right-of-way acquisition and relocation assistance and the Federal-State relationship. When recording an audiotape, it is important to select a skilled narrator with experience in voice delivery and inflection.

19-5.04(f) Combinations of Audio-Visual Aids

Many audio-visual aids are more effective when combined with each other during a single program. For example, a speaker may use slides, make a reference to a slide-tape presentation on relocation assistance, return to a live talk with slides, break for a movie demonstrating the effectiveness of a design feature, return again to a live talk, request input from the public, and use a large writing pad to record comments. The variety of using more than one audio-visual aid will keep the audience attentive and provide a maximum amount of information.

Section 19-5.04(c) discusses the use of a combined slide-tape program. Equipment is available which uses 4-track tapes so that the narrative can be prepared on one track and signals can be recorded on other tracks to actuate the slide projectors. This system provides maximum control over the length of the program and the information presented. Other variations of slide programs involve the use of multiple projectors with one screen and multiple projectors with multiple screens. Multiple screens can be effective when showing an overall view of an improvement with detailed coverage on an adjacent screen. The same advantages can be gained when a list of factors is shown on one screen and specific examples displayed on the adjacent screen. Many combinations are possible and experimentation and innovation can result in improved programs.

19-5.05 Post Activity Follow-Up

Those who attend a public involvement activity are normally interested in the results of the input provided. This includes the follow-up to questions for which answers were not available at the time of the activity. The public may determine the success or failure of a public involvement activity based on the actions taken after the activity. Therefore, follow-up is a significant action to minimize opposition and create a positive relationship with the public.

The appropriate type of follow-up will partially depend on the public's attitude at the public involvement activity. If the public has been generally supportive of the proposed project, it is probably not necessary to initiate a large-scale follow-up. It may suffice to write individual letters to those who asked questions which were not answered and to release information to the news media on any changes that were made as a result of the input. If the public attending the activity was generally opposed to the project, a more extensive follow-up is appropriate. In this case, write those individuals who had questions that were not answered and provide the information requested or explain the results of the investigation. Issue a news release that notes some of the major comments made at the activity and the Department's reaction to these comments. The release should also include a discussion on any changes resulting from the activity. For projects of major scope where a mailing list has been developed and where public involvement activities may span a long period of time, a newsletter might be developed and mailed to those on the mailing list and to those who attended the activity. Local radio and TV talk shows may also be used to disseminate information following a public involvement activity of major scope and impact.

In many cases, project revisions are often made after public involvement activities. Because these changes are indicative to the public of the value of its input, the district can improve relationships with the public by informing it of project revisions.

19-6 RECORDS AND REPORTS

19-6.01 Public Comments

The district must record all comments received by the Department on a given highway improvement and enter these in the project file. Encourage all commentors to put their comments in writing and include their name and address. This relieves Department personnel from the responsibility of interpreting the meaning of the commentor's spoken word in recording their input. Consider providing a Comment Form that commentors may complete and return. Include on the form the date by which the form should be returned.

Not all comments must be recorded verbatim. There will not be a transcript of most informal involvement activities, and the district representatives therefore must ensure that all non-written comments are properly noted and recorded. The recording of comments may use small pocket tape recorders, or each representative may carry a note pad and record comments during his conversations with the public. Two-person teams may be formed — one to interact with the public and one to record comments. Take notes during the receipt of comments to ensure that none are overlooked. Attempt to obtain the name and address of those persons offering comments so that a response can be forwarded at a later time.

Record comments when they are received, whether or not they were received as a part of an involvement activity. For example, if an individual visits or calls the district office and comments on a project, record that comment and include it in the project files. All comments received should be addressed.

19-6.02 Transcripts

A transcript is required for all formal and open house public hearings. Transcripts may also be useful for other meetings and activities, especially if critical discussion or input is anticipated. This might include meetings with local government officials, organized opposition, or officials of agencies likely to be impacted by the project. These transcripts are easily recorded using one of the small compact tape recorders available. In this manner, important meetings can be recorded exactly and there is no summary or interpretation to be questioned.

Obtain transcripts by tape recorders or Certified Shorthand Reporters. To ensure coverage, some districts have used both tape recorders and shorthand reporters. If a tape recorder is used, a backup recorder should be available in case of malfunction. Operate both recorders with staggered starting times so that no input is lost while the tapes are being changed. If an activity is scheduled that may last an extensive period of time, it may be necessary to arrange for more than one Certified Shorthand Reporter so they may operate in alternating shifts to maintain alertness.

For open house public hearings, the transcript will consist of a copy of the handout, the attendance list, all written comments received, a written copy of the narrative from the general

information presentation, and a written copy of the verbal comments recorded by the official recorder.

19-6.03 Reports

All comments must eventually become a part of the project files and the Phase I report. If a transcript of a public involvement activity is available, it should be included in the Phase I report package and provided to FHWA with the environmental documents. It must be included for public hearings. If a transcript is not available, prepare a summary of the substantive comments that have been received from the public and include this in the report. In either case, the report should also contain a response to each of the comments included in the summary or the transcript. If a comment is addressed in the body of the report, it is not necessary to repeat that information under "Responses." Refer to the applicable page number of the report.

19-6.04 Responses

The district should acknowledge in writing all written comments received from the public, including individuals, private organizations, or government agencies. The acknowledgment should thank them for their input and provide a response to their questions or comments. If an answer will not be available for some time, acknowledge receipt of the comment with an indication that a final response will be forwarded at a later date. Verbal comments should also be acknowledged and responded to when the name and address of the commentor is available.

To reduce the workload of responding to comments after a scheduled public involvement activity, forward copies of the summary of comments and responses prepared for inclusion in the Phase I report, with a letter thanking them for their participation, to all who attended the activity. Separate responses need not be prepared. This summary of comments and responses could also be incorporated into a newsletter.

The district should acknowledge and respond to comments received from other governmental agencies. These responses are likely to eliminate the repetition of those comments in subsequent formal contacts such as through clearinghouse coordination or the circulation of environmental documents. Contacts with these agencies indicate that they repeat comments previously given because they have received no indication that their comments were received or addressed by the Department.